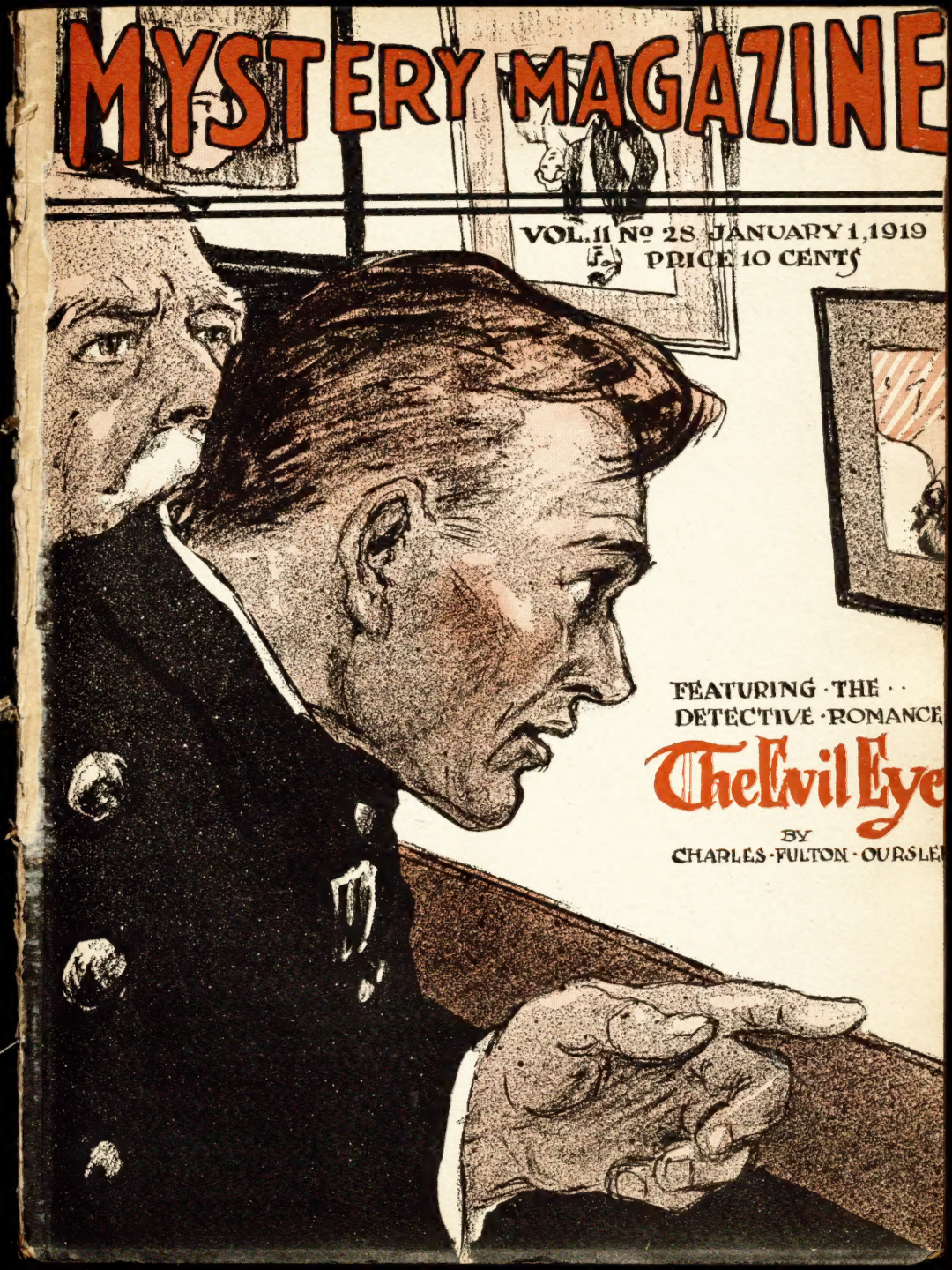


MYSTERY MAGAZINE

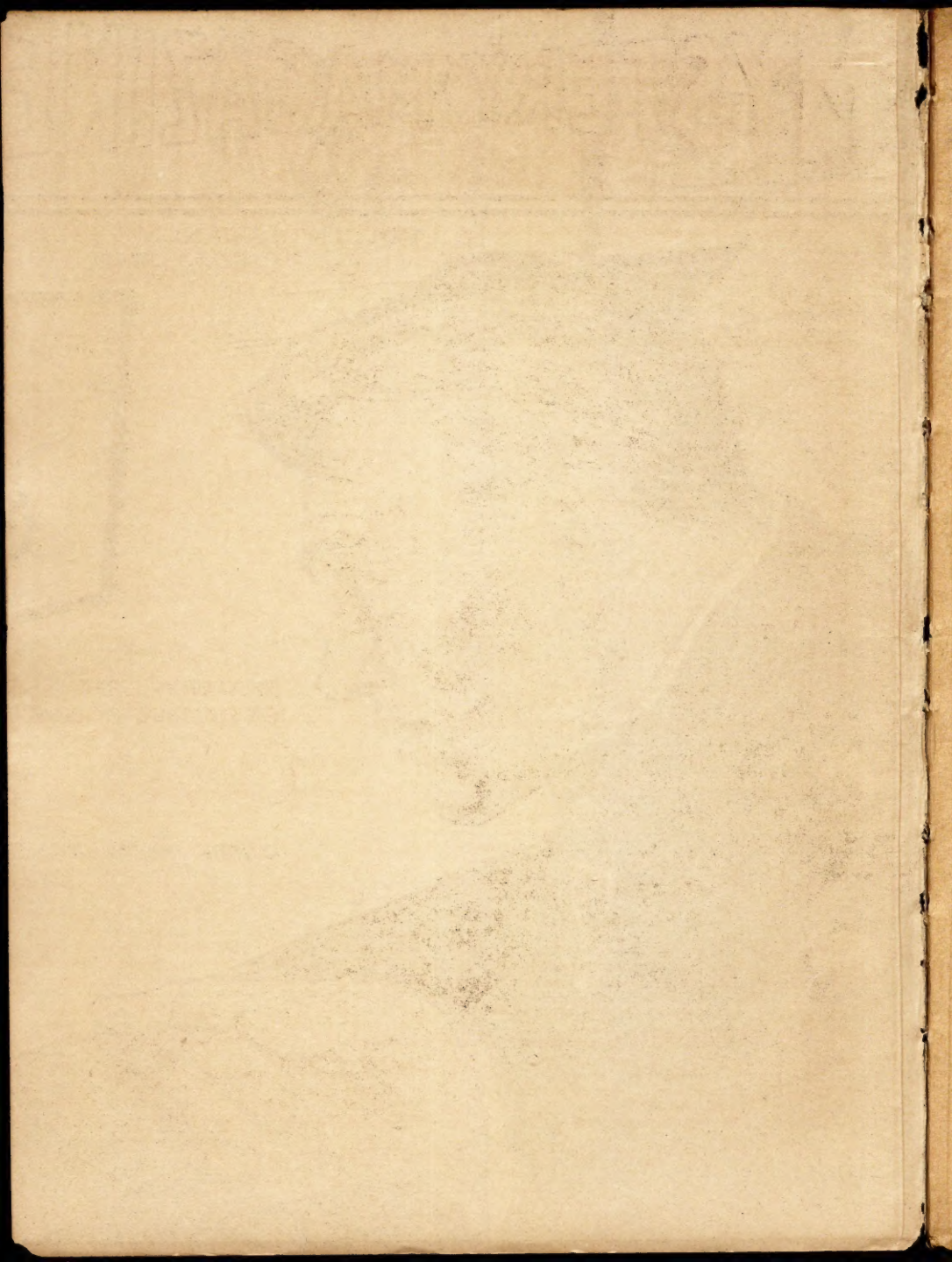


VOL. II No 28 JANUARY 1, 1919
PRICE 10 CENTS

FEATURING THE . .
DETECTIVE ROMANCE

The Evil Eye

BY
CHARLES FULTON OURSLEY



COMING IN OUR NEXT ISSUE, "THE THIRTEENTH DOOR." READ IT!

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. II.

JANUARY 1, 1919

No. 28

Copyright, 1919, by Frank Tousey, Publisher, New York. All rights reserved. Entered as Second-Class Matter November 5, 1917, at the Post-Office at New York, New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

Published Twice a Month by

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher

168 West 23d Street, New York

N. Hastings Wolf, Pres.
E. Byrne, Treas.
Charles E. Nylander, Sec.

LU. SENARENS, Editor

NOTICE—No letters will be answered or manuscripts returned unless accompanied by sufficient postage. The publishers disclaim responsibility for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts. Authors must name price wanted for submitted material.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE:

Domestic, Single Copy.....	10 Cents
Domestic, Yearly	\$2.50
Canada	\$2.75
Foreign	\$3.00

All remittances should be sent by express money order, P. O. order, check, registered letter, or draft to insure safety. We will not be responsible for money sent otherwise.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURE STORY	PAGE
THE EVIL EYE, by Charles Fulton Oursler.....	1
SERIAL STORY	
A COAT SLEEVE, by G. G. Small.....	38
SHORT STORIES	
EMPTY CAGES, by Will H. Greenfield.....	25
A TERRIBLE WOMAN, by Tom Fox—Detective.....	28
A LESSON IN POKER, by Louis F. Masson.....	31
HIS FIRST ATTEMPT, by John Perley Robinson.....	33
A SKILLFUL JOB, by A New York Detective.....	35
MISCELLANEOUS MATTER	
A "Freak" Bill.....	24
New Devices for Secreting Body.....	27
Newly Discovered Uses for Glue.....	30
Ostrich Meat Plentiful in Arizona.....	32
Jap Quick at Figures.....	34
Stump Houses	37
CURRENT NEWS	
Hunter Lassoes Bear—Fishskin Dresses—Lincoln's Honeymoon Cost \$4 a Week—New Explosive in South America—The Dugout—A Novel Scheme— Curious Uses of Vegetable Oils—Blazing Monitor Sunk to Save Dover—Superstitions of the Moon's Rays—Newest Things—How Punctuation was Invented	42

THE EVIL EYE

A STRANGE DETECTIVE STORY

By CHARLES FULTON OURSLER

CHAPTER ONE

MIDNIGHT AT BARE HILLS

THE first intimation that headquarters had of trouble at Bare Hills was about eleven o'clock one foggy Monday night late in October. I was on the telephone in the main office at the time. The telephone rang, and when I answered it I heard a man, whose voice was very much excited, say:

"Get me police headquarters quick, will you? Hurry! Hurry!"

"This is police headquarters," I told him.

"I want to talk to the boss," he shouted in my ear. "I want to tell about a murder!"

"Who's been murdered?" I shot back at him.

"My cousin," he answered, and his voice was shaking as if he had chills. "He's dead."

I told him not to get excited, and, reaching for my memorandum-pad, I began asking him some questions. He said he had come home to find his cousin, Mortimer Probury, dead in his library, not ten minutes before. His own name, he said, was Adam Rider. Their place was at Bare Hills, which is on the Hudson.

Luckily, it chanced that Inspector Gray was in the office, and, after telling Adam Rider to hold the wire, I explained, as quickly as I could, what I had just learned. One of the fine things about Inspector Gray is that he never gets excited. He looked at me hard for a moment, but twisted his white mustache thoughtfully. Then he suddenly walked over to the telephone, picked up the receiver, and barked into the transmitter:

"Say, Rider! Who killed him?"

He must have noticed my own astonishment, but he didn't give a sign of that, or anything else. He merely listened to what Rider was telling him with his face as cryptic as a stone figure.

"All right," he said, when the voice at his ear had stopped. "Healy and I will be out within three-quarters of an hour. Don't let anybody touch anything until we get there. Did the doctor say he was dead?"

He listened attentively to the reply, fumbling in his vest pocket for a cigar with his free hand meanwhile. The sudden bite he gave the tip of that stogie convinced me—for I was watching him closely—that Rider had just told him something he considered of importance. But he merely grunted a good-by, and, hanging up the receiver, turned to me.

"Inspector," I began, "I certainly do appreciate—"

"Shut up!" he broke in. "I know who I want. Here, McGuire, put somebody else on this telephone. I want Healy to go with me. Murder case. Old man Prodbury, at Bare Hills. I'll telephone you when I know something, and you can hold off bothering the chief until I do."

We got into the department's runabout, which was just outside, and I took the wheel. In two minutes we had lost Park Row behind us, and headed uptown swiftly.

"Get into Fifth avenue as soon as you can," prompted the inspector at my side, and then silence fell between us for perhaps fifteen minutes. All at once he startled me with a question.

"Did you ever hear of Prodbury before?" he asked.

"Don't think I ever did, inspector," I was forced to admit. It was humiliating to have to confess it too. Every policeman should know something about men who are important enough to be murdered.

"Mortimer Prodbury was one of the most unusual men I ever knew," said Gray decidedly. "He was a fanatic on the subject of Ceylon relics. Beyond the shadow of a doubt, he was the best posted man outside of Ceylon on the history, the arts, the religions and the philosophies of that many-sided land. His collection of antiquities—jewels, idols, precious bits of carving and such things—would fetch a million on the block. He had spent much time in Ceylon—years and years."

"Whew!" I ejaculated. "Where did he keep all that stuff?"

"In his study, where he was murdered!" was Inspector Gray's reply. That set me thinking. If it could be shown that some of those relics were missing, then there would be a possible motive for the crime. Meanwhile, we were making excellent time, and had soon gotten out of the city, and, hugging the shore as closely as we could, hurried on to the small town of Blecker, beyond which the house of Mortimer Prodbury lay, perhaps, less than a mile, according to the description given Gray over the telephone by Adam Rider.

Through this town—long since gone to bed—we passed like a streak of lightning, for Inspector Gray was constantly urging me to hurry. He was a calm, mild-featured fellow, and to look at him you would never think of him as a speed fiend. Yet when he was on a grim chase such as this, the sky was the limit with him, and we forced every inch of speed out of the car.

"That must be it," he said at last.

I looked in the direction toward which he had pointed. The mist from the Hudson was thick and dismal, but I could make out a blur of light, high over our heads, and I was sure the inspector was right. That must be Bare Hills. It made a bizarre picture—just a wisp of light—in all that fog. If he had been out on an ordinary errand,

perhaps I shouldn't have felt as I did, but I just seemed to chill at the sight of the place.

After floundering around in the darkness for a little, we managed to find a path, up which we climbed as quickly as we could in the gloom. The house of death became clearer with each step we took. It was a very fine old mansion, of brick and stone, and had evidently been built long before the modern suburban cottage had become popular. At the first glance, one would say that here was the home of wealth and good taste, for the architecture was substantial and pleasing. But somehow it had a forboding air. I suppose it was because I knew there was a dead man inside; but then I am not fanciful that way.

"Look on the porch," whispered Inspector Gray suddenly.

I did look. And what I saw I shall remember until I die. Pacing up and down was a misshapen figure, bent low, his form outlined to us in sharp silhouette by the light above his head. He was a hunchback—a feeble, white-haired hunchback—and he was rubbing his hands together, and laughing. He did not know we were coming.

I was about to call out when Inspector Gray caught my arm. Then he deliberately raised his voice and said: "No, Healy, I think you are wrong."

The ruse had its desired effect. It warned the hunchback on the porch of our approach, and it gave Inspector Gray an opportunity to see if the man would alter his demeanor when he knew he was being watched.

He stopped short at the sound of Gray's voice, and peered down the path up which we were toiling. As we came in view, Inspector Gray saluted, and asked:

"Who are you?"

To which the old man answered politely:

"I am Adam Rider!"

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT CREATURE HAS PASSED HERE?

IN considerable surprise, we mounted the steps and, reaching the porch, stood in front of the decrepit, misshapen, ill-favored Adam Rider, who had told us he was the cousin of Mortimer Prodbury in the brief conversation we had had with him over the telephone. He did not give us an opportunity to speak.

"There's been strange doings here to-night," he said, with a smacking of his lips that was utterly astonishing. It was as if he were gloating over what had transpired.

"Take us to the scene of the crime," ordered Inspector Gray, with that note of command in his voice which invariably secures for him prompt obedience. The old man smiled and bowed grotesquely, and, turning, made for the door. He walked with a limping, halting sort of gait, which, with his deformed back and long white locks, his black clothing and general air of being withered, gave us the impression of an old man, very much excited at what had occurred and, perhaps, a little hysterical.

We followed him over the threshold of the house of Mortimer Prodbury, finding ourselves in a large, richly appointed reception room, with a staircase at the farther end. The stairs curved in a wide and graceful sweep. In every feature of the house was evidenced the most careful and discriminating taste. It had been the home of a man who knew how to live well, without splurging, and I imagined it had been built after plans of his own making. This, I later learned, was correct.

Old Adam Rider, treading softly and shakily, led us to

the staircase, up which he toiled, wheezing and coughing, as if the exertion were a tremendous one. When he got half way up the steps, he turned his face around, and I could have sworn I detected the vanishing wraith of a smile—as if he could not resist grinning, under the circumstances. It gave me a strange sensation, for it was the first time in my career on the force as a policeman that I had ever found people making money over a murder.

At the top of the stairs we found we were in a long hall, with three doors within easy reach. Two of these were closed tightly, the other was ajar, and there was a narrow rectangle of light showing on the floor and walls. To this door Adam Rider walked, and threw it back with the air of an agent showing one through a vacant apartment. It was as if he were taking an actual pride in his business.

"There has been strange business in there to-night," he repeated, shaking his head and leering.

Ignoring him, Inspector Gray entered the room, and I was immediately behind him. One glance about confirmed the remarks and predictions of Adam Rider, however in bad taste they may have been. What we saw bore him out. There had unquestionably been strange business in this room since Mortimer Prodbury had last entered it alive.

Naturally, we looked first at the body. It was not until we became a little accustomed to the grim tragedy before us that we looked around and took in, one by one, the bizarre details of the crime.

The body was tilted in a helpless heap at one side of a large easy-chair. Mortimer Prodbury was in his dressing-gown, a purple and orange affair; a most vicious combination of colors. Somehow, since that night I have never seen those two colors in combination that I do not think of what happened at Bare Hills. The hands were clenched, as if he had died in acute agony. The expression on the face was of helpless dread; of a deep-rooted terror and despair, as if it were hopeless to struggle against an inevitable fate.

Around his neck a thin whip-cord had been twisted and knotted. He had been strangled to death.

"Is it not a strange business?"

The piping voice of old Adam Rider, over my shoulder, filled me with a sudden dismay. Startled, I turned to look at him, and again I caught the vanishing traces of a smile. I glanced quickly at Inspector Gray. He was looking deliberately at the old man, but his face was inscrutable. I meant to tell him later, however, what I suspected.

Without replying, Inspector Gray continued to stand, just over the threshold, taking in every detail of the room, studying it in sections, carefully, methodically, and raking, I knew, mental notes of everything essential, not one of which would ever be forgotten. On many cases I had worked with Inspector Gray, and I knew his methods.

"Aren't you going to examine anything?" demanded old Adam Rider at last. His voice was querulous, as if he were disappointed at Inspector Gray's silence and inaction.

The remark did bring a reply from Inspector Gray:

"My dear Mr. Rider," he said quietly, "I am going to examine everything—and everybody—in this house very thoroughly. Before I start in, I may as well tell you that I am a very experienced man, and as such have developed my own methods. I never deviate from these methods. One of them is that I do not permit myself to be interrupted when I am doing anything. I expect to be very busy around here during the next few hours, and

I shall not care to be annoyed. So please don't interrupt me."

"But I thought—in a murder case, you understand—that every detective began by——"

"Mr. Rider!" growled Gray, getting exasperated.

"That at least they used a glass—a magnifier, you know—and a tape-measure, and——"

Inspector Gray wheeled and faced the man belligerently. "Go downstairs and get together every person who lives under this roof, or who was here to-night," he commanded. "Herd every one of them into this room!"

He stepped out of the room, and tried the handle of a door in the hall. It fell back, revealing a small bedroom.

"Bring them in here," continued the Inspector decisively, "and tell them I shall examine each one in turn. Bring them in, one at a time, as I need them—starting with the one who first found the body. Get them together now. In about fifteen minutes I shall be ready for the first."

The old man smiled wonderfully at the question. His eyes gleamed with an enthusiasm such as I have seen brighten the filmy eyes of old veterans when they heard a band playing the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." He reached out and caught the hand of Inspector Gray between his own.

"My dear inspector," he said chokingly, "I thank you. All my life I have wanted to be a detective!"

He turned and made tottering for the stairs. At the edge of the first step he turned and smiled on us again.

"You know, inspector," he whispered, with his hands cupped over his lips, "I may be able to help you on this case."

And then he turned and made his way slowly down the stairs. The inspector turned to me with a whimsical little smile, which faded quickly as a serious look stole over his face.

"Healy," he said abruptly, "this is a strange business, isn't it?"

"It is that," I answered.

"But how strange do you make it?" he persisted, taking off his coat. He always worked in his shirt sleeves.

"It's strange enough for a man to be murdered with a piece of string," I replied.

He darted a quick look of disapproval at me.

"Is that all you've seen?" he asked in a disappointed voice, and I knew I had slipped up. I glanced quickly all around, but nothing struck my attention, and I had to confess that I hadn't noticed anything else especially peculiar.

"Well, look at that!" said the inspector, with a tinge of genuine puzzlement in his tone.

He pointed across the room to a photograph, hung on the wall. It had been misplaced; had been completely reversed, in fact, and was upside-down.

"What do you make of that?" asked Inspector Gray.

"There must have been a struggle," I deduced, trying to show him I had something of real detective instinct, for all my stupidity. "In the scrimmage they knocked the picture that way."

Inspector Gray gave a little snort of disgust.

"They would have to knock it off, and then hang it up wrong," he said. "That picture is hung on a wire that is suspended from the picture moulding, seven feet up. You'd have to stand on something to reach that. In a moment I'll take a look at that picture and see who it is. I fancy it will have something to do with this case. Look at that one!"

He had pointed to another picture, which was hung

just over the head of Mortimer Prodbury. With a little shock, I observed that it, too, was reversed. The picture had been hung deliberately upside-down.

"Now look at all the others," said Inspector Gray solemnly.

Every picture in the room was upside-down. And, as every one of them was suspended by long loops of wire from the picture moulding, it had been more than the task of a few minutes to readjust them in such an extraordinary arrangement. I could have cried out in my astonishment, as my eyes traveled swiftly around the room, to see that not a picture had been left in its proper position.

"Now, Healy," said Inspector Gray, in the tone a college professor assumes when he is demonstrating an experiment in physics that he knows will not fail him, "take a look at the forehead of the dead man."

I stared hard at the brow of Mortimer Prodbury, and made out some purple marks. But my eyes are not so good, and I had to confess as much to my superior.

"All that I can see," I added, "from where I am standing, are some curving purple marks. I thought they were caused by the strangling."

"Come over here," said the inspector, and we both walked over to the body. It was a grim figure the old collector made, as he sat there in death. He had been a fine specimen of a man, perhaps fifty years old, with raven black hair, a finely proportioned head, a massive brow and a masterful face. A man of force, of intelligence, and of great mental and physical power. So much one could tell by looking at him, even though his face now was distorted by its final suffering. These details implanted themselves firmly on my consciousness at that time, although I was for the instant deeply interested in those markings on the forehead.

"What do you make of them, now, Healy?" asked Inspector Gray.

"It's writing!" I exclaimed, with a little gasp, for I was mightily surprised. "But it's writing I can't for the life of me make out. It must be Greek, or Polish, or—"

"No, Healy," broke in the inspector, with a very serious voice. "It is nothing that you have as yet surmised. It is a strange, sinister writing, Healy. It's writing, backward."

Without another word, he went over to a reading table near by and searched around until he finally came upon a small mirror. He brought this back and held it a few inches away from the face.

"Read it!" he snapped.

I bent low and looked into the glass. The inverted message seemed to leap out at me, for the figures were large, bold and unmistakable. They had been imprinted on the forehead of the murdered man with an indelible pencil, or crayon, and against the paling background of death they stood out with startling distinctness.

"K—a—r—m—a," I spelt out and hesitated. "That's all," I added. "But that's a mighty lot. Those are the letters of some one's name. Find a name like Karman, or Karmal, or something like that, and you will be on the track of some one implicated in this crime."

I stood a little taller, a little proud of this *tour de force*, this brilliant exhibition of my budding deductive powers. But Inspector Gray shook his head grimly, and turned away, to replace the mirror on the desk.

"Not so, Healy," he said, a little sadly. "Mortimer Prodbury was a collector of Ceylon relics. And Karma is a word in itself; it is something the Theosophists believe in; it is a word that has come out of India—it means fate!"

CHAPTER THREE

ROSES

AFTER a further examination of the room that, to my observation, seemed almost preoccupied, Inspector Gray threw himself in a chair, opposite that of the one in which was the figure of the slain man. He stared at the body with unseeing eyes. I have already said that I knew some of the methods and some of the moods of the celebrated Inspector Gray, because I had frequently been associated with him. Consequently, understood him now.

Something that I had missed—just as I had failed to notice the pictures upside-down—had impressed him with the weight of a tremendous significance, and he was making ready to adjust himself to the situation. Presently we should be listening to the story of the crime, as related by those in the house, and it was plain to me that Inspector Gray desired that something he had found be cleared in his mind before he received the accounts of Adam Rider and those who lived with him.

Presently he turned to me and told me to go out and find Rider.

"Ask Rider," he continued, "who discovered the murder. Whoever he names, bring that person to me. Then you stand at the door here, where you can hear all that is said, but do not allow any one else to come into the room."

I found that Rider had followed his instructions to the letter. He had huddled into the small bedroom, which immediately adjoined the library wherein Prodbury had been killed, all the members of the household. He himself was guarding the door, rubbing his hands together, and making, altogether, about as hideous and deformed a shadow picture against the wall as I have ever looked upon.

"Have you got them all in there?" I asked.

"Every one," he answered softly, but with a note of pride in his voice. "I was under orders, you see—under the inspector's orders."

I began to believe that Adam Rider was either a harmless, weak-minded old man, or else a clever actor. Even his secret amusement struck me as not inconsistent with senile madness. But I resolved, at the first opportunity, to tell Inspector Gray how I had caught the old man laughing and smiling to himself, even after we had come into the house, and then let him act as he saw and thought best.

"Bring out to me, then," I said, "the person who discovered the body. Inspector Gray wants to talk to him or her."

I was totally unprepared for my answer to that question. Before the old man could turn on his feeble, shaking legs, some one stepped from the little bedroom to confront me. It was not the servant or attendant I had expected. It was as sweet-faced a woman as I have ever looked upon. She made me think of my own Nellie at home.

"I was the one," she said, very simply, and crossing her hands before her, as if resigned to the new ordeal she was about to face.

"Very well, ma'am," I answered. "I'm sorry to disturb you now. Will you please come with me?"

She walked by me, as I stood aside to let her pass, into the room, and as I reached the door Inspector Gray was rising from his chair and bowing. If he was struck by her beauty, he did not show it; but, in dealing with women, Inspector Gray is the most courteous and consid-

erable man I know. Even with the most abandoned wretches below the deadline, his manner is just the same. It was one of the finest traits of a very fine gentleman.

"You are——" he prompted, with grave courtesy.

"I am Eleanor Strong, a niece of Mr. Prodbury," she answered, averting her gaze from the figure in the chair. A little shudder ran through her frame, but otherwise she was entirely self-possessed.

Inspector Gray, for all his regard for the feelings of women, did not notice, or at least did not accord recognition to, the effect the sight of the body in the chair had on a young woman, so plainly of a highly nervous and delicately strung temperament. It struck me as being thoroughly unlike the man. If I had been in his place, I most assuredly would have covered it up with a sheet before asking a young woman to answer my questions in this room. But the inspector seemingly gave it no thought.

Indeed, what he did next seemed to me to be even cruel. Certainly, it was entirely unlike the man I had known in former cases. He drew forth a chair, and placed it carefully at a certain angle which I saw him select, although apparently he did the thing carelessly and naturally. Then he drew another chair forward and stood beside it.

"Won't you be good enough to be seated?" he asked, pointing to the chair which he had been at such pains to place properly.

The girl gave him a quick, startled glance, as if appraising whether he were friendly or not, and then sat down. Inspector Gray had secured the exact result he had planned, though I confess I could then see no reason for it. She was facing the body in the chair, and the inspector was sitting to one side. I remained standing at the door.

At the girl's waist was a bouquet of white roses, and these she kept twisting and breaking beneath her fingers. When I had first seen her, and, indeed, when she had answered Inspector Gray's question as to her identity, she had been a little composed; as much as any one could have been expected to be, under such conditions. But her white, squirming fingers, crushing those roses, told me her nerves were breaking under the strain of the studied kindness and gravity of the inspector's attitude, and the awful sight from which her eyes could not escape, unless she closed them.

"You are Miss Eleanor Strong," began Inspector Gray softly. "And you are the one who discovered the body. I wish—in your own words—you would tell me about it."

Eleanor Strong stiffened in her chair, as if bracing herself, and then, in a high-pitched voice that, I fancied, was ready to break almost at any moment into shrill, wild laughter, she began her story.

"I was at home—reading," she began. "I had been here all evening, when all at once I heard angry voices from the study of Uncle Mortimer."

"Just a moment," interrupted the inspector. "Where were you reading?"

"In my own room," she answered. "It is on the next floor. The voices came up to me. One was a long, penetrating voice, and it did not seem to be speaking our language; it sounded strange and foreign. The other was my uncle's voice, and it sounded angrier than I have ever heard it before in my life. He raised me from a little girl, as I am an orphan, and I have never heard him shout like that. He has always been most kind and gentle to me, though others called him cruel. Then I heard his

voice rise in a kind of suffering wail, and then there was absolute silence."

She paused, to regain command of her voice. Momentarily, she was regaining control of herself, in spite of the cruel position in which Inspector Gray had placed her. I was beginning to admire her courage.

"What did you do then?" the inspector asked.

"I was alone in the house," she resumed. "Uncle Adam had gone for a visit to some friends down the road, and the servants probably were in bed. I was afraid to delay by calling them, and so I rushed down to the door of uncle's study. I tried it, but it was locked."

I believe the calm, unshaken Inspector Gray was startled at that statement. I know I was.

"You mean to say the door was locked when you got here?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," she answered simply, as if she saw nothing extraordinary in that fact. "I tried the handle, and beat against the door, calling to uncle all the time, but no answer came. The key was in the keyhole. I heard it drop to the floor inside the room as I beat at the door. Then I remembered there was a key to every door in the house, a pass-key that will open them all, and it was always kept hanging on a nail downstairs. So I rushed downstairs and secured it. I came up again, opened the door and I saw——"

Here the unhappy young woman's feelings overcame her, and she gave way to unrestrained sobbing. Inspector Gray looked at me significantly, over her bowed head. I knew and I knew that it was better for her to cry like that. It is a queer thing about women; when you are on a police force you find it out quickly enough. Crying relieves them wonderfully.

After a little while Inspector Gray said gently:

"There are just a few more questions, Miss Strong. I am sure you will be brave enough to help us out by answering them."

She did not answer, but he persisted.

"What did you do, as soon as you opened the door?" he asked.

She raised her head, as if the question had surprised her.

"Why—I—I stood there and looked in," she answered.

"Then I rushed back, and closed the door and ran screaming downstairs. I fainted at the foot of the stairs, and when I was revived I was on my own bed, where the servants had carried me. Not long after that you sent for us all, and I tried to nerve myself to meet you. But you have made it very hard."

But Inspector Gray did not comment on that last remark.

"You mean," he insisted, with a slight emphasis, "that you did not really enter this room; that you merely unlocked the door, opened it and looked in? And this is the first time since then that you have been back here?"

Eleanor Strong gave a relieved little sigh.

"That is the truth," she said, in half a whisper.

Inspector Gray silently arose and walked over to the chair in which sat all that was mortal of Mortimer Prodbury. He turned to me almost like a conjurer about to show a trick.

"Another thing you missed," he said soberly. "Healy, you must learn to use all your senses. Smell, for instance. Didn't you notice the sweet odor when you came in here? I did—and traced it. It was the odor of rose-blossoms!"

He bent over and scooped his hands in the cushions of the dead man's chair. And what he gathered there he let fall in a little shower—white petals of roses, like those at the waist of Eleanor Strong.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CURSE OF THE EVIL EYE.

VERILY, the methods of Inspector Gray were peculiar. More than that, they were occasionally a stunning surprise, as in this particular instance.

If I had been in charge of that case, and I had been smart enough to find those rose-leaves, which had been covered by the folds of the dressing gown of Mortimer Prodbury, my immediate impulse would have been to have hammered home my advantage. I would have pinned the girl down to an explanation, then and there. That was what I expected Gray to do now, and it was very evidently what Miss Strong looked for as well. She gave a frightened little gasp, and rose from her chair, with one white hand clutching at its back.

"I—I was in here before," she choked, "earlier in—"

But she got no further. Inspector Gray cut her short curtly, brusquely. I was astounded at his tone.

"That'll do," he growled. "You may go now. You can reserve your explanations until later."

She was a moving thing to look upon as she stole a piteous, questioning look at the detective, and then turned to pass by me and go out. She was black-haired, with tresses as dark as midnight, and eyes like living coals. Her skin was as white as an alabaster box on the bureau in our bedroom, a family relic that my wife treasures. Her lips were as red as the powder that sometimes my wife puts on her cheeks. And she carried herself like a queen. As she passed by me, the odor of those roses came to me, and ever since that night, when I smell those kind of flowers, I feel sad and think of that night and Eleanor Strong.

When she had left us, Inspector Gray turned to me, and I fancied I detected a subtle change in his manner. He impressed me as being unstrung, upset, an altogether surprising condition in a man of the bulldog equanimity of this man.

"I'm going to make a complete investigation before I notify any one," he said. "There's more than appears on the surface in this case, and the man on the job now is the one that has to catch the murderer—or else you never can catch him."

"Or her!" I said, in a low voice, very knowingly.

He gave me an enigmatical glance, which to this day I cannot interpret, and told me to bring in next the person who had found Eleanor Strong after she had fainted. I conveyed this wish to the willing Adam Rider, and he immediately produced a stout, gray-haired woman, whom he introduced as Mrs. Hudson. She was the housekeeper.

"Been here since Miss Eleanor came—years ago—you understand?" whispered Rider in my ear, as I indicated to Mrs. Hudson that she was wanted in the front room. The housekeeper, folding her hands agitatedly beneath her white apron, and setting her chin determinedly, walked ahead of me with a certain decisive air that I admired.

Inspector Gray had resumed his seat when we entered, and he looked up with a kind of understanding sympathy into the honest face of the second witness I had brought him. He rose with a deference which went straight to Mrs. Hudson's heart, I was sure, and in a very gentle voice inquired if she objected to answering a few questions that might have a very important bearing on the tragedy. She answered in a voice that trembled a little, but which was full of feeling and earnestness, that she would be glad to tell anything that she could to assist.

"Who visited here to-night?" asked Inspector Gray, all at once.

He shot the question at her so suddenly that I could well understand why she started. The inspector was beginning to disappoint me. He had been a sort of hero to me for many years, and I was disappointed now to see him adopting tactics which would have been discreditable in an ordinary patrolman. His tone struck me as being actually bullying. I didn't know what to make of him.

"No—nobody at all visited here to-night," answered Mrs. Hudson timorously.

Inspector Gray sat silent, staring at her fixedly. His manner struck me as peculiar. He continued to gaze so long that I began to fidget. What with the corpse of Mortimer Prodbury lolling in the arm-chair right where I had to look at him as long as I kept my eyes open, and this strange, accusing silence of the inspector's, I began to feel uneasy.

"You are sure?" insisted Gray, after a long pause.

Mrs. Hudson gulped and blurted out that she was perfectly sure.

"You would have known if any one called?"

"Yes, sir?"

Again the inspector relapsed into silence; one that, this time, was broken by the housekeeper. She cleared her throat, and, glancing apprehensively over her shoulder, she said:

"But I know what killed him!"

By no sign did the inspector betray any token of more than ordinary interest. He had more control of his emotions than any other man I ever knew. He bent forward and quietly asked her what she thought about the case. "Before you tell me about Miss Eleanor," he supplemented. "It's the curse of the Evil Eye," said Mrs. Hudson, shuddering.

Inspector Gray nodded sagely. Since then he has confessed to me that he had never heard of such a curse before, but he always works on the theory that one must know everything possible about a mystery, if one wishes to solve it. So he merely asked Mrs. Hudson to speak out. "It came out of India, came after him, and hounded him, and wouldn't let him be, and finally it got him!" she cried. "He knew it was a-coming. He had heard the warnings in his dreams. He never told nobody, but often's the time I've heard him walking up and down in his study here, talking to himself about it, swearing at something, I never knew what, and once I heard him praying to be delivered of it."

She stopped and gazed upon Mortimer Prodbury, and there was something appalling to me in the calm way she looked at him. She seemed inured to the mere horror of the sight; but the strange curse seemed to fascinate her.

Suddenly she half rose in her chair, clapping her hands in her excitement.

"I remember!" she cried. "The foreigner that was here to-day—he must have been the man!"

"Who was that?" asked Inspector Gray.

"It was just after lunch, sir; about one o'clock, or maybe a little later. I was cleaning up in the dining-room when some one rang the bell. I went there, and I saw a tall, dark-complexioned man, with piercing eyes that looked right through me, it seemed to me. When I opened the door, he bowed profoundly, and then, without waiting to be invited, pushed past me and stood in the hall.

"Tell your master, Sahib Prodbury, that Ram Singh has come to see him," he said, and I hurried upstairs, for I was kind of afraid of that man. You see, I've heard master tell, many years ago, how an old devil woman had

put the curse of the evil eye upon him when he was in India collecting his relics. I think he said it was because he hadn't given her any money. He used to laugh about it, as if it were a great, big joke, until about a few months ago, or maybe longer, when all at once he stopped talking about it. It used to be one of his favorite yarns, but when some one mentioned it at dinner a short time ago I saw him get very pale, and he quickly turned the conversation.

"Well, when I got upstairs, I tried this very door here, but it was locked. I could hear Mr. Prodbury walking up and down inside, very quickly, and I think he had been listening to the conversation down in the hall. I don't know why I think that; I simply had that impression. Anyhow, he roared out when I knocked, and wanted to know what I wanted. I told him a man who said he was Ram Singh wanted to see him. At that, I could hear him kicking the chairs and swearing.

"Then he came very close to the door and, opening it just a little way, he said: 'Tell him I'll talk to him at this door for two minutes.'

"I went downstairs and delivered the message to the tall, dark stranger. He smiled, as if he were pleased, or maybe that he thought it was funny. Anyway, he reached into his pocket and gave me a coin. I noticed his hands were long and dark and slender."

"Did you touch his hand?" inquired Inspector Gray.

Mrs. Hudson looked as surprised as I felt at such a strange question, but she said she had felt his finger-tips.

"They were very soft—not rough, or hard?" pursued the inspector.

She admitted that such was the case. She hadn't thought about it at the time, but she did remember that his finger-tips were soft like a woman's.

"Go on!" said the inspector.

Mrs. Hudson then related how the dark stranger had gone upstairs, and had come to the door where I was at that moment standing guard. She frankly confessed that she had stood listening in the hallway below.

"I was afraid for Mr. Prodbury," she explained apologetically. "I heard everything that was said distinctly. Ram Singh said: 'I am here, as I promised I would be, Mr. Prodbury.' And Mr. Prodbury said: 'Who, in the name of the fiend, are you?' And at that Ram Singh just answered: 'I am fate. I can pass through, even where doors are locked, sahib. The curse of the evil eye has come home at last. To-night it will blink at you.'"

With that he turned away laughing musically, according to Mrs. Hudson, and came lazily down the stairs. She had seen him to the door. In answer to Gray's queries, she said he was dressed very stylishly, in a gray tweed; that he carried a cane; that his figure was striking, and that she had noticed particularly the gleaming gems on his fingers. His hair was shining black, his eyes dark and his whole manner like ferocity in repose.

"And then——" prompted inspector Gray.

Mrs. Hudson continued by describing her activities during the remainder of the day. Mortimer Prodbury had refused to leave his room for dinner, but insisted that his meal be brought up to him. This had been done, but he had eaten very little. Evidently he was gravely concerned. Once he had asked that his cousin, Adam Rider, come to him, but the old man was not at home. He had left instructions that Rider see him, no matter at what hour of the night he returned.

It chanced, Mrs. Prodbury added, that Rider, whose ways were a little eccentric, had gone calling on a number of persons down the road toward town, and was late getting home. Meanwhile, no one appeared to have

heard the sounds described by Eleanor Strong as coming from this room, except Miss Strong herself. All that Mrs. Hudson knew was when she heard an ear-piercing scream, and, hastening from the back of the house, found the prostrate figure of Miss Strong. Calling the other servants, she had them carry her to her room, and just then Adam Rider returned. With Mrs. Hudson, he went to the study and then he had telephoned the police.

"And then——" prompted the inspector again.

"That is all," said Mrs. Hudson wearily. Her long recital had wearied her; she was anxious to leave the room. But Inspector Gray was not yet through.

"And you are still certain no one else called at the house to-night," he said gravely.

"I am certain," she answered firmly.

"Who is J. S.?" he demanded sternly.

It was a hit. No one could deny that the question had utterly astounded her. Inspector Gray had taken her completely off her guard; she was almost wringing her hands in acute mental anguish.

"How should I know?" she asked, her voice breaking.

"Isn't it young Strong?" he insisted.

"What has that got to do with it?"

The voice was not Mrs. Hudson's. It was a voice of deadly fear and excitement; the cold voice of proud despair. It was just at my shoulder, and I turned like a rocket. Eleanor Strong had stolen upon us before we were aware.

"It has a great deal to do with it," replied Inspector Gray. "I ask you not to be surprised at my statements, but to help me to help justice, Miss Strong, no matter how it hurts. I was not in this room ten minutes before I knew your brother had been here this evening; that you and Mrs. Hudson had lied to me to save him; that he had quarreled with Mortimer Prodbury, and I shall not be long in finding out why they quarreled."

"It's a lie!" blazed the girl, stamping her foot in her rage.

Silently, Inspector Gray held out his hand. Something was glistering in his palm. The girl gazed upon it, and quivered, and Mrs. Hudson burst into hysterical sobbing.

"Your brother left his stickpin caught in Mr. Prodbury's dressing-gown," said Inspector Gray. "Where is your brother, now, Miss Strong?"

She clasped her hands, her arms straight out before her, a look of intent, pained purpose searing her face.

"I will not tell," she said, between closed teeth. "I'll never tell!"

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EXAMINATION OF ADAM RIDER

IT is a theory of Inspector Gray that a detective should never force his hand at a crisis. A man of different stamp might have handled the situation thus precipitated in a vastly different manner, but this man had his own way and always followed it. When Eleanor Strong closed her eyes and stood in the doorway, she was, as he knew very well, keyed up to heroics. She would have endured torture, even death itself, rather than say one word which would implicate her brother at that moment. To do battle with those emotions then would have been a mistake in Inspector Gray's judgment; it might prove eventually a very costly blunder.

Gray stood regarding her a second, and then he said kindly:

"My dear young lady, it is not necessary for you to get wrought up over this unhappy matter. I should advise you not to do so. If your brother had any hand in this business, you know that he cannot escape the law. If you know that he is innocent, and fear that circumstantial evidence will incriminate him unjustly, you will do him the best service by telling the truth freely and quickly. But I would not intrude upon your grief and excitement any further at this moment. Go to your room with Mrs. Hudson. Both of you try to get a little sleep. I shall not require any further information from you this evening, I am sure. Good-night!"

Surprise and gratitude showed in the girl's face as she looked up into Gray's face. She seemed to trust him from that moment. I had to admit in my heart that he was right. If he had tried bull-ragging that girl, as so many of the plain-clothes men do from headquarters, he would have driven her to the edge of hysterical desperation, but his calm and gentle reassurance won her confidence immediately. Even Mrs. Hudson smiled at him through her tears, as she led the unhappy Eleanor from this grim chamber of horror.

"Going to listen to what they talk about when they get into her room?" I whispered to Inspector Gray.

For a second he stared at me in profound silence. Then he said sternly:

"Healy, I brought you out on this case because I liked you, and thought you had some sense. But look here! Try to keep your head. Don't try to be a correspondence-school detective. Bring Rider in here."

The aged hunch-back came in, rubbing his hands together and trying to erase that crafty smile from his face with serious efforts at self-composure. There is nothing more disconcerting than to watch a nervous person trying to keep from smiling in the presence of death. It is a nervous malady which attacks many people; it had Adam Rider in its grip now.

Inspector Gray pointed silently to the chair which the others had occupied; a chair which forced the witness to gaze upon the body of Mortimer Prodbury while answering the questions of the detective. This did not seem to affect Adam Rider perceptibly. He sat down with a sigh, and remarked in a low voice that he still insisted it was a strange business, all around.

Before he had finished the remark, Inspector Gray interrupted with another of those unexpected, astonishing remarks with which he had punctuated the last hour and a half.

"Do you believe in palmistry?" he asked Adam Rider. The old man shifted in his chair, and remarked that he did not believe in any superstitions such as that.

"This talk about the evil eye, and all that derved tommyrot," he continued. "This murder was done for a purpose, and don't you forget that."

"What kind of purpose?"

"Robbery!"

"How?"

"I mean that my cousin had, in his collection which you see locked up in glass cases around the walls of this room, some of the most precious temple relics in India. The king of these was the famous black pearl from the temple of the Seven Snakes in Benares. I venture to say that if you looked in its resting place at this instant you would find it missing."

Inspector Gray was plainly impressed at this bit of information.

"We must discuss that in just a second," he said. "That is exceedingly interesting. But I wish you would answer my question more definitely. Do you attach any importance at all to cheirography or cheirognomy?"

"What are they?" asked Rider, with a rather self-conscious leer. "I don't make out your language at all, Mr. Gray."

"Cheirognomy is the science of the mounts on the hand, and cheirography of the lines. Together, they constitute

the science of palmistry. By studying the hand, a palmist can tell many things. I am an amateur palmist."

That was the worst lie I think I ever heard Inspector Gray tell. He didn't know anything more about palmistry than I did about the science of stuffing green peppers. But the assertion did not seem to impress Adam Rider particularly.

"How does that affect your investigation of this crime?" he asked, with a trace of asperity in his voice.

"I should like to look at your hand," said Inspector Gray and bent forward. Adam Rider glared at him, as if he suspected the investigator were out of his head. Then he willingly complied.

Inspector Gray took his soft, smooth hand in his own, and studied it intently. He gazed earnestly at the sleek, long fingers and regarded the palm with the greatest concentration. At length he released the hand and lifted his eyes until they confronted the old man.

"Your greatest fault," he said, "is untruthfulness. Your finest quality is imagination."

Before Adam Rider could resent this blunt appraisal of his character, none too flattering to a sensitive man, and all the more extraordinary when delivered under such circumstances, Inspector Gray was his old, practical self again. Clearing his throat, he resumed:

"We must now get back to the purpose of the crime. It does one good, I find, in the midst of such an investigation, to forget the facts around one and enjoy a bit of something different, such as character-reading, in order to fit one better for the immediate tasks at hand. Now, Mr. Rider, about this black pearl. What do you know about it?"

Here, plainly, was a subject on which the old fellow could speak with rare enthusiasm.

"It is beautiful!" he said, in a soft, sighing tone that had a strange quality in it, like the negro leaders of plantation singing; the moaning of the religious fanatic. It was a quality of voice unmistakable even to an untrained ear. Inspector Gray did not bat an eye, but I was certain he had noticed it.

"It is the most beautiful stone in the world," continued Rider. "It is an enchanting little egg of black night, shot with golden stars, and the more you look at it, the more beautiful it is. For two thousand years it was one of the eyes in the large snake at the altar of the temple of the Seven Snakes in Benares. One day, about fifty years ago, it disappeared. It was never heard of again, until, one day, my cousin purchased it from a holy man of the hills. The next day this holy man was found dead by the roadside. That was ten years ago. That is why I think—"

"What?"

"The priests of that temple, I have it on no less an authority than my own cousin, had determined to get that jewel back, so that their holy marble snake would no longer be one-eyed. For a great many years they did not know who had purchased it from that treacherous holy man of the hills. But the day came when they did find it out, I believe; they came here, and they got it."

"Mr. Inspector," I blurted out. "Mrs. Hudson that afternoon. But the inspector let out a mighty sneeze at that moment. It was such a sneeze that it drowned my words, and echoed drearily around the room. And as he shook his head, in sneezing, he gave me a baleful look. He did not want me to refer to the story of the Indian guest who had called on Mortimer Prodbury in the early afternoon."

"And you knew where that jewel was placed?" asked the inspector, when he had recovered himself.

The old man threw up his hands, as if disclaiming any responsibility because he did possess that information.

"Every one knew it," he said. "That was the pitiful mistake of the whole thing. He made no secret of having the jewel. There's where he kept it!"

He pointed across the room to one of the large mahogany cases, the shelves of which were laden with glistening jewels, and daggers, and rock specimens, and a

heterogeneous collection of other articles from every part of mysterious India. Involuntarily, I stepped forward, curiosity impelling me. But Inspector Gray did not move. "No use looking, Healy," he said quietly. "I noticed it was the only empty case in the entire collection two minutes after I had come in the room."

Like a man with a thousand eyes. To me it had seemed that he had done nothing except step casually around the room. No foolish tricks with this quiet-mannered man from the police headquarters. No spectacular dropping to his knees, looking through microscopes, or carefully collecting cigar ashes in an envelope. Nothing of the spectacular as you read of it in the methods of fiction sleuths, and the picturesque private agents who revel in newspaper publicity. Inspector Gray had merely walked around the room, darting casual glances to the right and left of him as he walked. Yet what had he not found? He had found the rose petals beneath the dressing-gown of the dead man; he had found the cuff-link of Eleanor Strong's brother, and suspected the identity of the owner from the graven initials, difficult as any cuff-link initials are to identify anyway, and now, out of thousands of cases containing relics and jewels, he had spotted the one empty one, and docketed it in his mind, where it was ready when the time came. I took off my hat and made him a little bow. But he only grunted.

"Another question, Mr. Rider," he said. "In fact, several. How long have you been living out here at Bare Hills?"

The old man pursed his lips and knitted his eyebrows, as if he were finding it a mighty task to calculate. I think we were both considerably surprised when he said:

"Eighteen months, a week and two days."

"You are very exact," remarked the inspector. "Where had you been living before?"

"In China."

"Why live there?"

"You see Mortimer and I were boys together. We were raised together. And we made, in our younger days, a voyage through Europe and Asia together. But when we came to Peking, I fell in love with the city. I refused to continue our itinerary; I refused to return to America; I made up my mind to stay in Peking, China. And stay there I did, for more than forty years. But at last homesickness overtook me. I had corresponded with my cousin meanwhile, and I wrote him that after forty years of letter-writing we should at last meet personally again. He wrote me joyfully to come on; that my home should be in his home. He was an exceedingly generous man, was that man there, dead now in his own easy-chair, an exceedingly generous man. I received a hearty welcome when I got here, and here I have been ever since."

"I see," said Inspector Gray. "That will be all for this evening, Mr. Rider."

The old man scrambled from the chair with alacrity. He seemed glad that he could escape from the chair, for the sight of the dead man through all this squinting had probably begun to wear on his nerves. He left the room, bowing and smiling slightly; bowing though his back was crooked, and smiling that nervous, quivering smile that came and went so bafflingly.

"Any one else?" I asked, as he passed out. "What is your next step? Look for the missing brother of Eleanor Strong?"

Inspector Gray shook his head sagely. "The missing brother will return here to-morrow morning, unless I am greatly mistaken," he said confidently, but he gave me no opportunity to ask a question about that riddle. How should he know any such thing as that? Had I not had the same opportunity that he had had of finding it out, if it were possible for any one, under the circumstances, to find it out? Was he not, as an officer of the law, taking a grave responsibility on himself in not starting a police round-up in search of John Strong? My impulse would be to notify every police station in the city, and sound a country-wide warning. Yet here was my chief calmly predicting the missing man, who seemed

certainly involved in the case, would, of his own accord, return boldly to the house of crime.

"There is something far more significant than the fact that John Strong quarreled here with his uncle to-night, and left his cuff-button on the floor beside the murdered man," said the inspector. "Go over there and take a look at the empty jewel case—the one that held the black pearl."

I obeyed in silence. It was a red velvet jewel case, opened, and it was resting on the edges of its upper and lower parts—straddle-legged, as it were.

"What is significant about that?" I asked. "Damnation," exploded Inspector Gray. "Don't you see? The case is upside-down!"

CHAPTER SIX

THE INQUEST OF MORTIMER PRODBURY

THIS is a record for the public. It is not an official document, but a record of the important happenings—not all the happenings—at Bare Hills immediately following the murder of Mortimer Prodbury. Therefore, with a few words, I am passing over a great mass of details which, if recorded here, would serve to make the narrative ten times longer than it should be, and would so clog it with unnecessary details as to rob it of dramatic interest—which, I am informed, is essential, if I hope to get the public to read it—and would thus defeat its own purpose. As I have made as clear as I can, I am a plain, ordinary policeman, although Nellie insists that I am more than that, because she says I have imagination: In this case, however, one does not need imagination, for the facts are strange enough just as they transpired. I can't give the case any more dramatic interest than it naturally has, because I am a policeman, and not a romancer. But I can possibly save it from dullness by eliminating the unnecessary portions and presenting only the high lights.

To run over briefly what happened, immediately after the examination of Adam Rider, in the early morning hours out there at Bare Hills, I may remark that Inspector Gray, after cautioning me to remain carefully on guard in the room, went to the telephone, which was in the hallway. He surprised me considerably by first calling three of the principal morning newspapers and stating the main facts over the telephone, laying particular emphasis on the fact that he had found some rose petals under Mortimer Prodbury's dressing-gown; and their incriminating implications, when considered in connection with the fact that Eleanor Strong was wearing those roses at the time she was being examined by the inspector.

Such a proceeding utterly astounded me. It was very late, and unless he had called the city editors of those papers by telephone the story would never have appeared in the morning newspapers the next day. No one has ever accused Inspector Gray of seeking publicity, and certainly no one has ever accused him of heartlessness. Yet here he was going out of the way to get this story in the newspapers, and moreover he was fastening the heavy weight of newspaper innuendo and suspicion against a girl who might be utterly innocent of any wrong-doing. Actually he had done all this before getting in touch with the front office downtown and acquainting them with the facts. Knowing Inspector Gray as well as I did, I found it very hard to understand him, the way he had elected to handle this particular case.

Having despatched these three calls, he finally did ring up headquarters and give a brief summary of the case. He asked for two more policemen to be sent to the house, and also the coroner. Then he returned to me. I was boiling under the collar, for all my years of discipline and my unbounded admiration for this man.

"Say, chief," I remonstrated miserably, "what did you put that on the girl for that way? I don't believe she did it, anyhow."

"My dear Healy," he said loftily, "your present business is standing guard at that door—a totally useless proceeding, by the way, but it sometimes pays to observe the conventionalities. However, your duties for the moment are confined to that. You are distinctly not to give me your opinion of this case. I don't want it."

After that I kept quiet, but I was pretty cut up about it. I am a sensitive man, anyway, and I couldn't see where I deserved a thrust like that. However, my moods were evidently of no moment then to Inspector Gray. He set to work in earnest on the business of examining this room carefully. He began at the body. He pored over this for half an hour—as ghastly work as ever man attempted. He did not shirk a single detail. He studied the wounds in the neck which had been made by the cord with which Mortimer Prodbury had been killed. He removed the cord and twisted it around his fingers, getting some of the blood on his hands as he did so. He put the rope back around the neck, and then, standing behind the chair, held the ends, as if to see how the murderer had stood as he drew taut the cord and thus ended the life of the man before us. He looked at the hands of the dead man carefully. This new fad of hand-examination sadly puzzled me. For the life of me, I could not see what Inspector Gray expected to get out of any such means of examination as that.

Then he began a careful study of innumerable details around the room. He picked up one thing after another, studying them intently. Now he did remind me of the traditional detective of fiction, and I confess I was not pleased. I was sure he was getting nothing from the prodigious labor he was giving to the quest.

Over in one quarter of the room there was a small, old-fashioned desk. It was something like the desks the teachers used to sit at in the country classrooms when I was a boy. It had four slender, carved legs and a slanting top, trimmed in green felt, and the top lifted up, admitting access into a box-like region beneath. The top of this desk was empty, save for pens, paper and a blotter. Inspector Gray sat down to it and lifted the lid.

With an exclamation of satisfaction, he drew out three or four bundles of letters, tightly tied. Turning on the electric light just over the desk, he promptly snapped the string around one of them, and let the envelopes fall sprawling before him on the desk. He began to whistle, and I knew that was a good sign. Inspector Gray was happy, because he was on the trail of finding what he was after, whatever that was. He was so happy that he could whistle in the presence of Mortimer Prodbury's dead body.

"Letters from Adam Rider to Mortimer Prodbury," he told me over his shoulder. Evidently he had regretted his former brusqueness, and was taking this means of cementing our former friendship.

"Good many of them," I commented politely.

"Oh, they go back a great many years. The ones I have just opened were written more than fifteen years ago. Look at the old-fashioned stamps on them. They were very affectionate letters; evidently Adam Rider and his cousin liked each other a great deal. But I should certainly like to see some of those modern letters."

Rapidly he cut the strings of the other packets, and started rummaging through the letters, searching for postmarks of recent date. Finally he held one aloft in triumph.

"Here's the last letter Adam Rider wrote before leaving China," he exclaimed. "The postmark proves it."

I confess I saw nothing important in the discovery, yet the inspector seemed highly elated. He opened the letter, read it through with occasional grunts of satisfaction, and then, carefully folding it, placed it in his pocket. He spent the next half an hour reading those letters, and a number of them he selected to put beside the first one in his pocket. Finally he replaced the cords

around the envelopes and tied them, after which he shoved them back into the desk-top.

"So much for so much," he said, more to himself than to me. "What's that noise, Healy?"

The coroner, accompanied by two policemen, was in the hall below, and they were presently ushered up to us by Adam Rider, who seemed to have no intention whatever of going to bed this night.

Coroner Blake stood in the doorway, much affected by the sight of the body. I have been on lots of cases with him, and I think he is the last man on earth who should ever have been appointed a coroner. He feels bad as soon as he sees a body. That makes a good doctor, but a poor coroner. The two policemen stood impassively behind him. They were Hicks and Mergle, from the "C" division. I did not know them very well, but during the time I worked with them on this case I grew to know them and to like them. I should like to say here that they are brave, intelligent, capable patrolmen. If I hadn't been promoted since then, it wouldn't be my place to say this. As it is, I am glad of the opportunity.

"Well, well, well," spluttered Dr. Blake nervously. He stroked his long, mutton-chop whiskers, and then wiped the perspiration from his forehead. "What have you found out, Mr. Gray?"

"Mr. Prodbury was strangled to death, as you can see," replied Inspector Gray.

"Yes, but who did it? Who did it?" demanded the coroner querulously.

"That is a difficult question to answer," rejoined Gray, unmoved. "The windows and the doors were locked from the inside. The key was in the lock on the inside. There is no place for concealment in this room. Yet Mr. Prodbury was murdered."

"But have you no clue—"

Inspector Gray did not permit himself to be further interrogated.

"It will take a little time to get the murderer, and convict him," he broke in. "The best thing for you to do is to bring in a verdict that Mr. Prodbury came to his death by an unknown person, who, however, was about five feet ten inches tall; fair-haired, with a long nose, dark eyes, and a decayed tooth on the left side of his mouth. He wore soft leather shoes, No. 8's, and probably a dark suit of clothes. That will be sufficient, I imagine."

"But, Mr. Gray! How can you know all this, and yet not know who did it?"

Inspector Gray laughed a little sarcastically.

"A scientist, by seeing a single piece of work, can tell you the kind of soil from which it was taken, how old it was and how it was formed," he replied. "But it would be a very difficult matter for him to tell you the place on the world's surface from which it came, unless it happened to be an unusually odd place, with no other like it on the earth. The circumstances here are identical. I have deduced just so much as I have told you. But as for identifying the criminal—that must wait a while. You will facilitate matters by following my suggestion."

The coroner, who hadn't much head of his own, and who consequently admired brains like a savage admires the sun, smiled expansively.

"Mr. Gray, you're a wonder," he said. "There must be an inquest, but I shall take your hint. It will be a formality, which will not impede the work of the police."

Inspector Gray thanked him and turned to me. He instructed me to get from Adam Rider a list of all the places he said he had visited on this occasion, which, if substantiated, would, of course, be a complete alibi for him. Meanwhile, he ordered the two men to be at his disposal in the further examination which, with the aid of the coroner, he meant to conduct. So far as I could see, the investigation was completed. Yet Inspector Gray indicated there was still a great deal to be done in looking over the room in which the crime had been committed.

Rider was very complacent when I went down to him. I found him on a settee in the hallway. His long, slender hands coiled around his knees, his deformity very plainly discerned in the glare of the hall lights which shed down upon it especially a pitiless radiance, his hawk-like countenance looking more inscrutable than I had ever seen it before.

I told him bluntly what I was after. He smiled ingratiatingly and answered:

"It is a pleasure, Mr. Healy, to tell you. I was at the Joneses during the afternoon, where I played checkers for three hours with old man Jones. Then I went across for the roadway, and, feeling tired, dropped in the Sunset Inn, and after a glass of ale sat in the chair and slept all afternoon. I slept there until eight o'clock, for it was a fine fall afternoon and I was mighty comfortable. Then I dropped in at the store down at the corner of the road and watched another game of checkers until well after ten o'clock. Then I came home."

On the face of his narrative, Rider had done exactly what many another old man, dwelling in a rural community, such as existed near Bare Hills, had done many, many times. Moreover, he could certainly be proved a liar or truthful. In each case he had specified where he had been, and in each case he had specified a place where he must have been observed. It would not be hard to learn whether he was telling the truth.

I returned with my information to Inspector Gray. He told me to return downstairs and keep an eye on things generally, and try to find out something, until morning. Then I was to go out to the various places he had named and check up the statements Adam Rider had made. I naturally resented this a little. Hicks and Merkle, the two men from headquarters, were allowed to remain upstairs, but I was consigned, on their arrival, to the lower floor. I am a strict disciplinarian, whether as officer or private, and I obey orders without question. But I thought I was getting a raw deal.

Adam Rider had gone to the basement when I went downstairs. I heard him pottering about, humming to himself a simple ditty about a girl named Sue and a boy named Bill, and how happy they would be. I thought it was decidedly out of place in a house of death, and put him down again for a fool or a criminal, and possibly both.

However, I was due for a surprise when I set out the next morning to learn how well he had told the truth. I had been given a warm breakfast by Mrs. Hudson, who was kindness itself, and was half-way down the path that led to the roadway when the first of a long series of surprises during that day began. I saw a man entering the gate; an athletic-looking fellow, with brown hair, that broke in curls from under his black-and-white-checked cap. He swung up the path with long strides, until he caught sight of me. Then he stopped and squared himself in front of me. He was clutching a newspaper.

"What's the matter here?" he cried.

"What do you mean?" I parried at him.

"Have you arrested my sister?" he shouted, and momentarily I was expecting him to spring at me. Then I understood. This was John Strong. And I understood the inspector's trick. He had filled the newspapers with suspicions of Eleanor Strong, and the young man had rushed to the house to defend her. It is a rotten business, being a detective, sometimes.

"I do not know what has been done," I told him, truthfully enough. "Inspector Gray is in charge. Better go up and see him."

Without a word, he flung himself past me, racing up the pebbled path, lined with cedars and with elms. I watched his boyish figure, and I liked him. He was a splendid type of the courageous, manly young American. I made sure that he actually went into the house, where Inspector Gray was still at work, and then I continued about my own assignment.

Let me say at once that I verified every statement Adam Rider had made to me. He had played checkers with

old man Jones, just as he had told me; a dozen people told me they had seen him asleep on the Sunset Inn porch, and almost as many more remembered how long he had lingered in the general store, before saying good-night to the "boys," who were none of them under sixty years. He had told the literal truth. I felt ashamed of the suspicions I had entertained against an eccentric, harmless old man.

Inspector Gray did not seem surprised when I told him this. He shook his head and presently told me that young John Strong had come back and had been arrested. I asked him if he thought him guilty and he referred me to the description of the murderer he had given Coroner Blake. Then he told me to go home and get some sleep and to be back by six o'clock that evening, when the inquest would be held.

The inquest was just such an affair as Gray had indicated he wished it to be. It was thoroughly perfunctory. Coroner Blake assembled his jury in the great parlor downstairs. There were twelve stolid farmers and farm hands and they listened owl-eyed at all that was said. Eleanor Strong, Mrs. Hudson, Adam Rider, and the other servants were examined, and gave substantially the same testimony they had already told Inspector Gray. Then they called John Strong.

He frankly admitted having called on his uncle that evening. His uncle was the guardian of both himself and his sister. He had wished to enlist in the aviation corps, and needed his uncle's consent. His uncle, for some unaccountable reason, had been violently opposed to the idea, and the boy said he had impetuously accused his uncle of being pro-German. They had had the first serious quarrel that had ever passed between them, and there had been high words. He had left in high dudgeon, and had heard his uncle lock the door as he left.

Then Coroner Blake asked a really startling question: "Do you know who will inherit Mr. Prodbury's money?" he inquired.

John Strong reddened at the question, and then grew deathly white.

"My sister and I, so I understand," he said.

"Did your uncle threaten you with disinheritance?" demanded Dr. Blake.

"He did," answered John Strong. That ended his examination.

The jury brought in a verdict that Mortimer Prodbury had been strangled to death by a person unknown, and recommended that John Strong be held by the authorities until the investigation had been completed. I knew that Inspector Gray had dictated that verdict beforehand. It is often done.

I come now to the beginning of the grimmiest and most terrible features of this strange business; to the series of events which wrapped the house at Bare Hills in new horror, and added the most inexplicable features to the affair.

I shall try to be explicit.

CHAPTER SEVEN

STARK TERROR

IT must be understood, from the outset, that the door which opened on the parlor, where the body lay, was guarded.

This was, in itself, an unusual proceeding; one which, at the time the order was given, Inspector Gray did not take the trouble to explain. He contented himself, when he left the house, following the inquest, with placing a man on duty in the house, with orders to watch and to keep his eyes open. This was Merkle. He was instructed to remain at the house all night, informing me on the way back to headquarters with him, informing me on the way back that my presence would be required at seven the next morning at Bare Hills to relieve Officer Merkle. I started to ask him what was the reason for this. Young

John Strong was under arrest, and certainly it looked as if the State had the goods on him. Personally, I was quite ready to believe him guilty, although I must admit that I had liked the young fellow, from what I had seen of him. And while I could well understand that Inspector Gray might find some further evidence by remaining in the house, hunting up and down the rooms as was his wont, I could not see what he hoped to gain by keeping bluecoats on guard, after the inquest was over.

However, I decided not to ask him about it, point-blank. I had received too many rebuffs on this case to put my head in another trap while I still had my wits about me. "Any special instructions while I'm on duty?" I asked, hoping that this might open up the way to a further explanation.

"Just keep your eyes open," was the inspector's reply. "I am leaving a lot in the hands of Merkle and yourself—Merkle to-night and yourself to-morrow morning—a great deal more than you imagine. But it is the only thing to be done. There are some other formalities that I've got to go through. For one thing, I've got to find out the name of the man who murdered Probdury."

The matter-of-fact way in which he said that robbed the words of any significance until they sank in. Then I turned to him, with a puzzled laugh.

"Will it be as easy as all that?" I asked, doubtfully. "It will not be so hard," he admitted. "The hard thing will be to prove that there is such a thing as an evil eye!"

Incredulously I stared at him. Could it be that this was the explanation of the inspector's queer behavior lately—that he was mentally affected? He must be, hard as it seemed to think it. Inspector Gray actually talking as if he believed in the Indian superstition of the curse of the evil eye.

"Don't look at me so hard, Healy," he said, as if annoyed. "I am not a fool because I believe in the evil eye. I do believe in it, and you are a big fool for not believing in it, after what you have seen in that house back there on the hill. The evil eye has been the saving element in this case. The evil eye solved the mystery—and yet you don't seem to have grasped it. The evil eye has made everything plain. It will catch the murderer for us."

"Was it that Indian fellow who was calling at the house the day of the murder?" I asked.

"That remains to be seen," answered Inspector Gray, and for the rest of the ride back into the city he sat in absolute silence.

Though it was not until later that I learned all that was done, I know now that Inspector Gray had a very busy evening before him. As for myself, I was only too glad to snatch a few hours' sleep, after the neat little hot snack Nellie had ready for me when I got home. When I woke up the next morning, I felt fit as a fiddle, and rode on a street-car out to Bare Hills without a portent of what I was to see when I got there.

However, I did feel that something was wrong when I climbed up the hill, though whether it was really a premonition or actually due to the deserted air of the place I am not ready to say. Of one thing, however, I certainly had no forewarning, and that was the white, scared face of agonized relief that Officer Merkle turned on me when I entered the hallway.

He was standing at the entrance to the parlor, where the body lay, and he was as straight and erect as if he were on review before the commissioner. But his fingers were twitching in spite of himself, and his cheeks were white as flour, and his eyes were bulging.

"Glory be!" he ejaculated, when he caught sight of me. And then, a little weakly, he repeated it—"Glory be!"

I asked him what was wrong, but for a moment or two he could not answer. Dumbly he pointed a shaking finger through the doorway, tossing his head from side to side as he did so, and making strong efforts to control his agitation. I walked up to him, and gave him a poke in the ribs; just to liven him up. Then I looked through the door.

At first nothing struck me as peculiar. There was the black coffin, with the candles burning steadily at either end. No one was in the room. The curtains were drawn tightly, and there was that sickeningly sweet odor of waxen flowers from the lower end of the room which invariably makes me hate the custom of sending blossoms to the dead. It was when I glanced at these flowers that I began to suspect that all was not well here; that there was some tangible reason for the excitement of my comrade.

Then I was convinced. The conclusion was inevitable. The head of the casket was not too feet from that bank of flowers. When I had left, the evening before, that coffin had rested the other way. The foot of the coffin had been near those flowers. It had been moved. To all intents and purposes, it had been turned upside-down.

I stole a glance at Merkle. He was stuttering over an "Ave" and watching me narrowly, to see if I understood before he felt master of himself sufficiently to point it out.

No need for him to point out anything to me now. The growing terror of the place was too plain any longer to hide its ugly head. The prints of its fingers were not only here or there; wherever the eye turned, they were to be seen.

The creature with the curse of the place upon him had passed here. Some weird creature, maybe; or whatever it might be, it could not hide its trail. The coffin had been moved; it had been turned around; where the foot had been the head was now, and the foot was where the head had been. I looked at the flowers. They, too, had been touched by the uncanny thing. They had been turned upside-down. The huge bouquet of roses and carnations had been turned so that its melancholy stalks were sticking dolefully into the air, while the crushed and bleeding blossoms were on the floor. A wreath had been turned, so that the card of the mourner was at the bottom, inverted, and could not be read. The pictures had been upset—upturned, turned round, reversed. With a singular, maddeningly unbelievable lust for inversion, the dread influence had left nothing passed over.

"What does it mean?" I gasped.

"As sure as I stand here, I ain't moved," Merkle protested, in a shuddering voice. "I've been at that doorway all night, except for two minutes, when I went down in the kitchen to get a bite to eat with the old man. All at once I looked in there and that's what I saw!"

"Windows locked?"

"Everything locked and me at the door."

It got me, I confess freely. Shivers ran down my spine, and I felt a sickening sinking in the pit of the stomach.

"What is it?" I asked in an awe-struck tone.

"Sure, it's what they've had all the talk in the papers about," whispered Merkle. "It's the curse of the evil eye!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

TROUBLE, TROUBLE, DEEP AND DOUBLE

I ASKED Merkle why he hadn't notified headquarters by telephone.

He answered that he thought they would laugh at him and say he had been drinking. He preferred to let me tell Inspector Gray, and then be questioned by the chief. He was very simple-minded, but in deadly earnest about the phenomenon. But he was the most unnerved man I have ever seen in a policeman's uniform.

"Have you notified Rider, or any one else in the house?" I asked him.

"No!" was his reply. "I dared not leave this door. I was waiting to catch that thing, whatever it was. I was scared of it, but I made up my mind to catch it, just the same. But it never came back. But I called out."

"Well?" I prompted, as he came to another pause.

"I called out," he repeated, "but no one answered me."

I yelled my lungs out. I stamped on the floor with a club. I even fired my revolver. But no one answered."

For a painful moment I stared at Merkle in silence. Then I asked him what he had done after that.

"I stuck right here," he replied doggedly. "I was waiting to catch that thing! But it never came back."

"Merkle," I blurted out, "you're one of the reasons the fellows who write detective stories in the fiction magazines always poke fun at the force. And they're right! That's the rotten part of it. Didn't it make you suspicious when you fired off your revolver, and no one came racing downstairs?"

He shook his head, a little defiantly, and said he thought they were a bunch of heavy sleepers, that was all.

"But, Merkle," I argued with him, "this is the day set for the funeral of old man Prodbury, and the whole family should be up and doing early. Here it is moving toward nine o'clock, and not a soul downstairs, even though you fired off your revolver. There is something wrong here!"

He scratched his head and said there might be something in it after all.

Thoroughly wrought up over Merkle's lack of appreciation of the serious situation I felt sure had developed, I turned from him without any more to say. As lightly as I could, I fairly ran up the stairs, for I wanted to keep my approach a secret as long as I could. The value of surprise under such circumstances often means victory or defeat, as it is a success or a failure.

But I came upon nothing. Beginning with the great library and study where Mortimer Prodbury had been killed, and passing from it to all the other rooms on the floor, I found them alike deserted. The house echoed as my footsteps became louder, for I soon cast caution to the winds as I began to believe that the house was entirely empty.

"Merkle!" I yelled down the stairs. "Go down to the kitchen and see if any one is down there."

Then I rushed up to the third floor, and began exploring through rooms I had never seen before, though Inspector Gray had made a thorough examination of the house. Apparently everything was deserted. I did not see a bedroom in which there was a single indication that any one had slept there. In one room I noticed a photograph on a bureau of a woman with two sons. The woman was Mrs. Hudson, and I judged this was her room. It was empty, like the others. There was not a crease or a wrinkle on the snowy-white spread. Mrs. Hudson had not slept in her bed that night.

It was so with the room of Eleanor Strong; with Adam Rider's room, and all the others. The entire household of Mortimer Prodbury's accursed home had disappeared. Adam-Rider had vanished from the premises. Mrs. Hudson was nowhere to be seen. Eleanor Strong was not here. On the day on which he was to be buried, Mortimer Prodbury lay amid new horrors in his own home. His own coffin had been turned around with a sacrilegious, unrelenting hand. The very flowers his friends had sent him had been tossed upside-down by an enemy whose malice was not extinguished, even by the cold of death. And then, to crown the ghastly business, there had come a wholesale mystery—a triple disappearance from a house guarded by a cold-blooded, matter-of-fact policeman who swore by the stars no one had passed him all night.

I felt bewildered. I gazed around helplessly. This was too much for me. I could chase a burglar for miles, and give him battle if he were a giant when I caught up with him. I could stand back a whole mob, single-handed, though it were bent on lynching. I have done those things. But fighting the unknown is a different proposition. It makes it worse, because you don't know how to go about it.

I caught the sound of footsteps mounting the stairs from the first floor. I was still on the third floor. Warily I crouched near the wall and peered over. I caught sight of a black derby hat. It was not Merkle then. I crept down a step, and poised myself, ready for whatever might happen.

"Put up your gun, Healy! Don't shoot, you d— fool!"

It was Inspector Gray, and there was as much annoyance as surprise in his tone. But I was so glad to see him I did not mind his displeasure. I fairly raced down the stairs and tried to explain it all to him in a breath.

"They're gone!" I cried.

"Who is gone?" inquired Merkle, his face darkening.

He frowned at me savagely.

"All of them," I gasped. "Adam Rider, and Eleanor Strong, and Mrs. Hudson, and everybody else. The house is empty, except for the body in the coffin, and—that's turned upside-down!"

My words produced a curious effect upon Inspector Gray. A really singular expression came over his face, a fleeting sort of rapture, as if this new phase of the mystery was welcomed. I did not know him then as well as I know him now. If I had, I would have understood. It was such an unfathomable problem that it called out to him, it lured his imagination, it dared him to solve it. Your genuine detective always feels that way in the presence of a genuine enigma. He doesn't want any one else to solve the problem for him. He wants to work it out for himself, like a boy with a puzzle.

Before I could say anything more, Merkle climbed up the stairs and stood at attention beside the inspector. He had to report that there was no one below. The house was empty.

There was a subtle anxiety creeping into Inspector Gray's face, as he stood there looking at us, but not seeing us. A dozen questions were born behind his lips, but died there. Something of which he did not speak was on his mind; that was plain to one who had been with him enough to know the signs. But what it was I did not guess, nor did I have the faintest suspicion until very recently.

"They're missing," he repeated, a little blankly. "Oh, yes, I rather expected—but we've got to find them!"

Merkle was too much downcast, and I too much startled and mystified, to say anything. We cheerfully resigned the leadership of the whole business into the hands of our inspector. And while he had been abstracted at first, he suddenly woke up, as if he had suddenly touched a live-wire.

"Boys, they must be in here," he said quickly. "All except one of them, I mean. I am not surprised. It's just a little game of hide-and-seek, but heaven only knows what the result will be when we find what we are seeking. Bruce yourselves for a shock, boys—and don't forget we are on the trial of a creature who already has been killed once!"

With that Inspector Gray pushed past me and reached the third floor landing. Holding out a hand for silence, he stood there, listening intently. The effect was eerie. The utter silence that followed, in this house of mad, stark horror, was threatening in its very quietness. I would have relished the slightest noise during those interminable moments that Gray stood there, listening, with his head drawn down a little and his right hand extended in warning to us not to move.

"They are very near here," he said quietly. "I can hear them breathing!"

He moved cautiously along the hallways, stopping finally in front of an old-fashioned wardrobe, with two doors, which were fitted with heavy locks. Inspector Gray tapped on this loudly, after first trying, without success, to open the doors. He waited for some response, but there was none. Again he tried the door, but all his efforts to dislodge them were unavailing.

"That's going to be a tough job," he said, a little ruefully. "If you try an ax on that thing, and there happens to be some one inside, you'll kill them when you break the door down."

"Look!" cried Merkle, in awe. He pointed at the bottom edge of the door, and we both saw what had called forth his exclamation. There was a tiny ribbon of blood making its way beneath the door.

Without a word, I ran down the hall and into a bedroom at the far end, which had been Mrs. Hudson's.

rushed toward the bureau and rummaged among various old-fashioned articles of women's dressing apparatus, finally coming across a shoe-horn, a button-hook and a curling-iron. With these I raced back to the old cupboard, where Inspector Gray was trying to fit a skeleton key into the lock, without success. That was a lock that had been inserted before the days of the Civil war, and it was as sturdy now as it had ever been.

It was the inspiration which came to me at this moment which helped to earn me my promotion, upon Inspector Gray's recommendation, a few months later. With the three articles in my hand, I rapidly explained my plan to Inspector Gray, and immediately proceeded to put it into execution. The shoe-horn, which was the thinnest of the three, I inserted beneath the hinges of one of the doors, prying it with all my strength into the tiny crack. The cabinet had been built by some old wood-worker who knew his business, and every joint fitted perfectly. However, I made a little headway, and finally managed to get the little metal tongue all the way through. Using this as a pry, I got the curling-iron in, working feverishly meanwhile, and breaking off tiny splinters of wood every second or so.

Gradually the plan began to promise success. As I worked feverishly, enlarging the opening I had made, I saw that it was only a matter of time, and as I labored I prayed that I might finish the job in time. The butt of my revolver followed the curling-iron, and with a little working I managed to pry an opening big enough for my night-stick.

I inserted this as far as I could, bracing it against the side, and then exerting all the pressure I could on the lever which I had thus created. The old cabinet strained and complained, but I held on, bringing every ounce of strength I had to bear on that single purpose. There was a crashing, a snapping, and the door toppled down over on me, as Inspector Gray and Merkle tried to catch it. They dragged it over to one side, for it was still held to the wardrobe by one damaged hinge.

We beheld a spectacle for which we were not prepared, though we had pictured many things.

In that narrow cabinet had been thrust Eleanor Strong, Mrs. Hudson and the three women servants. Gags had been jammed into their mouths, and they had been bound with towels and ropes and twine until they could not speak or move. They had fallen into a pitiful heap on the floor of the old cabinet. If we had been much longer, suffocation would have killed them all.

In falling, one of the servants had struck her head against the edge of the cabinet, and the blood from her wound had trickled beneath the door and warned us.

Not one of them was conscious.

CHAPTER NINE

THE GREAT PRODBURY INDIAN COLLECTION

"NOW, Mrs. Hudson, I think you had better tell us what happened."

Inspector Gray was speaking, and his voice was as calm and gentle as if he were a nurse. We had carried out the unfortunates from their prison in the cabinet, and every one had been brought back to consciousness by the judicious use of restoratives, coupled with the bracing air that came through the opened windows. Eleanor Strong lay on Mrs. Hudson's bed gazing in stern confusion at the inspector. Mrs. Hudson had crept close to her and, being herself the best recovered of the party, was stroking the young woman's face and murmuring loving words almost incoherently.

"There ain't much I can tell, sir," returned Mrs. Hudson, without stopping her administrations to Eleanor Strong. "It all happened so quick."

The inspector nodded encouragingly and signed for her to go on. She said that it had happened about eleven o'clock on the evening before, just as all in the house were about to retire for the night.

"To-day," continued Mrs. Hudson, with a broken little sob, "is the day of the funeral and we all have so much to do. We decided we must get to bed as quickly as we could. We had been discussing the plans for to-day down in the kitchen, and, as all the work was done, we all started up the stairs together. As I, who was leading, reached the top landing, however, I beheld a very strange thing.

"A tall, bearded man, with black hair and wild-looking eyes, was standing just at the head of the stairs. There was a pistol in his hand, and he pointed it directly at me, while he told me to throw up my hands. There was such a stern, insane note in his voice that I was too frightened even to scream. I threw up my hands and walked out into the hall, as he had commanded me.

"When we were all arranged in a row before him—and some of the girls were crying loudly—he turned to me and asked: 'Where's old man Rider? Old Adam. He can tell me what I want to know.'

"I answered that Mr. Rider was probably asleep in his room. He smiled a wicked kind of smile and said it could not be better. Then, with his free hand, he pointed to a chair in the corner, on which there were several towels, bandages and a ball of twine. He ordered me to tie up the others. It was an almost impossible job for me. I had never tied any one up before and I don't know anything about it. But when I told him that he simply grinned a little and brandished his revolver. He told me he would shoot me dead if I didn't obey his orders. So I did the best I could and he watched me very closely. Several times he showed me where knots were weak; and he insisted that I make a thorough job of it. After Miss Eleanor and all the others were tied to his satisfaction, he made me stand before him and he tied me, even more effectively than the rest.

"He was a tremendously strong man. He carried us, one after the other, up the two flights of stairs to this floor, and he put us into this cabinet. Then he locked the door and went away whistling. I can't tell you how terrible our plight was in there. We could hear you looking for us out here, but we could do nothing to let you know where we were, he had stuffed the rags down our throats and tied them there so well. And even now, after all our pain and sufferings and anguish, we can't see what on earth the man's object was."

Eleanor Strong was still staring fixedly at Inspector Gray. There was a queer gleam in her eyes just then, and for one wild moment I could have sworn he had answered it with a little smile. But it was fleeting, gone in an instant, and I could not be sure. Two of the housemaids were weeping softly; all of them were vastly affected by the terrible experience through which they had passed.

But Inspector Gray was not ready then to give up his questioning.

"Merkle, where did you stand, on guard last night?" he asked.

"At the parlor door, sir."

"And that parlor door—doesn't it open out on the same hallway to which the stairs from the kitchen lead at the farther end?"

"I believe it does, sir."

"Well, then, why in the name of all that is holy didn't you hear what was going on at the other end of the hall? What was the matter with you last night, anyway, Merkle? Do you mean to stand there and tell me that a criminal could capture, bind and gag all these women within a few feet of your hip pocket and you not be any the wiser? Why it's inconceivable."

"It's just as inconceivable to me, inspector, as it is to you," replied Merkle quietly. I liked the way he said that. It sounded man-like. He was suffering keenly, too. At that moment it did look pretty bad. To save Merkle, if I could, from any further "bawling out" in front of

the women. I interrupted with a question. I asked the inspector if he knew where Adam Rider was.

"Better go see," he said, casting a rather anxious glance toward Eleanor Strong.

Merkle replied that he had been everywhere before the inspector's arrival, that he had carefully inspected every room in the house and looked in the cellar, and that Adam Rider was no more to be seen than had been the other occupants of the house.

"Then he, too, may be dying right close to us and we not knowing anything about it," I broke in. "Our next step is certainly to look for him!"

"All right," acquiesced the inspector, a little weariness and impatience manifesting themselves in his voice. "Go ahead and look for him. I think Mrs. Hudson has quite recovered from her experiences now, and can look after the rest. I am going down into the study. There are a number of things I wish to examine there. So you boys go look for Rider. Just one minute, though, Merkle."

The latter halted, with his foot on the stairs. Inspector Gray walked up to him and sniffed his breath suspiciously.

I felt rather sorry for Merkle. He was not a drinking man, I felt sure, and I thought the inspector should have known it, as long as Merkle had been with him on the force. The inspector's methods on this case were beyond me. He gave an emphatic little nod, as if that whiff of the policeman's breath had satisfied all his doubts, though whether for good or bad it would have been hard to say. That dismissed us, and we set off to search for the old man.

We did not find him. We searched everywhere, upsetting family closets, and looking in the most unlikely places. Our experience on the third floor had satisfied us that the mysterious tall stranger who had made prisoners of those women was a man of the utmost resourcefulness, and that we might find the old man in the most unlikely place. We, therefore, let nothing escape us. I even saw Merkle look into the ice chest, and then close the door with a disappointed expression. I, myself, was looking under a lounge at the time.

A little dismayed, and still further mystified, we climbed the stairs and made our way to the second floor, where Inspector Gray had said he would be finishing up some work in the study where Prodbury had been killed. The door was wide open as we reached it, and Inspector Gray was standing in the center, with his hands in his pockets, and gazing upon us with a radiant countenance.

"What do you suppose has happened, men?" he asked as we stood at the door waiting his orders.

"Adam Rider has been murdered?" I suggested.

"They found him upside-down!" was Merkle's guarded guess.

But the inspector nodded to indicate that we were wrong. He spread out both his arms and with a wide sweep indicated the cases where Prodbury had displayed the jewels, the manuscripts, the ceramics and the other treasures which he gathered together in India.

"Look 'round you," he said, with an extraordinary chuckle. "Every blessed jewel of this collection is gone. So are some of the manuscripts. The collection is practically wrecked; every prize in it has been stolen by a discriminating hand. It's the best thing that could possibly have happened!"

I believe we thought him mad. Undoubtedly his words sounded like madness. And he was smiling as he said them. Had the curse of the evil eye fallen also upon Inspector Gray?

CHAPTER TEN

INSPECTOR GRAY'S BUSY DAY

THE inspector seemed to enjoy our confusion and dismay.

"Don't worry, Healy," he said. "I'm not crazy, and I know exactly what I am doing. I am telling the literal truth when I say that I regard this latest develop-

ment as the best thing that could have happened under the circumstances. It has absolutely justified my own views of the crime. It has dove-tailed exactly with my own reasoning. As soon as I receive a telegram which I am expecting, I shall be ready to act, and unless I am very greatly mistaken we shall have the handcufts on the criminal within twenty-four hours."

In defiance of all the rules and regulations, I lifted my hat, waved it in the air and gave a little solo cheer.

"That sounds like your old self, chief," I said, with honest relief in my voice. "But gee, you've been acting queer for the last few days."

He smiled a little grimly at that.

"He's been up against a queer proposition," he replied. "You don't run across a case every day where a man who has locked the windows and locked the doors of his study is found strangled to death, and nobody to fasten the crime on—no way, apparently, for the murderer to have gotten in or out."

"There's young Strong," I suggested, merely with the intention of leading him on. He laughed shortly at the mention of Eleanor's brother.

"He couldn't have done it," he said easily. "You've surely guessed why I had him—arrested?"

He put a meaning emphasis on the last word, but I did not get his meaning even then. I had to confess that I did not know why John Strong had been "arrested," and I gave the word the same nuance of expression that he had.

"Well," he sighed, "I am hoping you will soon understand. Tell you what, Healy. I think you and I are going to take a little trip on the railroad. Yes, I am sure we are. And we are going to bring back with us a gentleman who will know more about this business than any of the rest of us. Now I purpose to bring him right into this very room. I will put him in that chair there. I will rehearse for him, step by step, the reasoning that passed through my mind and which led me, irresistibly, to his own doorstep. And then we shall have a confession, under the most dramatic conditions possible."

I rubbed my hands with the fervor of anticipation. "And then we'll know why all these things have turned upside-down and what was done with poor old man Rider," I said.

Inspector Gray turned to me with a rather superior smile.

"Those things, my dear Healy," he assured me, "are the merest trifles. They have no significance to the analytical mind, except as they serve as clues. Now, if those very things had not occurred—if the pictures on these walls had not been turned upside-down, if that famous black pearl had not been stolen from this case and the case itself turned upside-down, if the word Karma had not been written backwards on the forehead of the murdered man, if those extraordinary things had not occurred in the parlor and the women of the household had not been kidnapped—if it had simply been an out-and-out murder, mystery it would have been devilish hard to solve. But as it is—why, my boy, it was quite easy! Ah, the doorbell. I fancy that may be the very message I am waiting for."

His assumption was correct. One of the housemaids, her eyes red and blood-shot from weeping, stole up to the door and held out the little blue-and-white envelope. The inspector ripped open the flap impatiently, muttering to the girl not to let the messenger go, as there probably would be an answer. I studied the face of Gray as he read the telegram, and I saw that his hopes had been fulfilled. There was a scarcely perceptible smile on his firmly set mouth as he looked up at me, and I saw that his eyes were gleaming, with the fires of conquest already kindling.

"Things are coming our way," he said abruptly. "Every indication now points to success. Just a minute, my girl."

He went over to the writing-desk that had been Mortimer Prodbury's and, seating himself, hastily wrote an

answer. Bidding the girl instruct the messenger to have it despatched at once—that it was police business and urgent—he turned to me and asked me if I still felt like taking a train journey. I replied that the change would do me good, after the horrors through which we had recently been participants.

"I feel the same way myself," he confessed. "We will go right away, and I shan't be sorry to miss the funeral services either."

"I wonder what miracle will happen in the midst of it," I hazarded, as we descended the stairs.

"Nothing will happen," he said. "There will be no more miracles in Bare Hills until we return with our prisoner—unless, indeed, they should find the remains of Adam Rider."

I turned quickly on the stairs, for the remark had really startled me. Somehow I had not come to look on the old man as really dead.

"You think they have really killed him, then?" I asked. But the inspector had relapsed into one of his uncommunicative moods, and I could get nothing more out of him. His silent abstraction continued until it began to be almost unbearable. Not a word did he say to any one as we left from the house, except to send Merkle back to headquarters with a brief bulletin to the chief, and a parting, whispered word to Eleanor Strong, who looked very fragile and appealing in her black dress.

We clambered down the hillside with no conversation at all. He led the way and I followed meekly. I did not mind his lack of words, for it was enough to me that at last we were to have action; that we were really on the trail of the guilty man, and that a few more hours would lead us directly to the place where he was in hiding. With this to roll as a sweet morsel beneath my tongue, I was content to plod on, letting the inspector have all the quiet and repose of mind he wanted. He needed it.

He led the way to the street-car tracks and there we boarded a car, which connected, after half an hour's ride, with the uptown terminus of the subway, which at that point, near Bronx Park, was very much of an elevated. All the long ride downtown was passed in the same stony silence. I bought a newspaper and soon became interested in the lurid description which was printed in the paper of what had transpired at Bare Hills recently. Of course, it was too early for the papers to have anything about the sensational developments of the night and morning, but they still carried a description of John Strong's behavior at the inquest, and the entire weight of innuendo and suggestive phrase was thrown against the young man. It was evident the entire town felt the young man was guilty. I pitied him and I pitied his sister. Once I caught the inspector's eye reading the headlines while his glance slanted down over my shoulder. It struck me that he was considerably annoyed at what he read there.

Leaving the big tunnel at Thirty-fourth street, we walked over to Seventh avenue and strode into the majestic mall of the Pennsylvania Station. Inspector Gray made his way to the ticket office and I, standing behind him, heard him ask for two tickets to Philadelphia.

"Philadelphia," I said to myself. "In less than three hours we'll be there. By heck, we won't have to wait so long, after all."

My surmise was correct, as there was a train for Philadelphia, Washington and Baltimore that was to leave within a few moments. In five minutes we were seated on a Havana, and I had rescued my old meerschaum—a birthday gift from Nellie three years ago—from its hiding-place and received the inspector's official permission to smoke it. Ten minutes later he confessed that he had inhaled its aroma previously that official sanction or a breach of front-office rules would never have been given. It is some pipe, for all that.

We were on an express, and we gathered a good head of speed, as soon as the Manhattan Transfer was left behind us. There was no stop between us and Philadelphia, even Trenton and Newark being passed up by this

imperial special. The consciousness of this was pleasing, and we lay back comfortably giving ourselves up to our own reflections. By the time we had passed through Jersey City, the inspector had begun to melt. At a little farther down the line, he began to talk, and when he wants to be the inspector is one of the most fascinating conversationalists in the world. He had evidently been devoting some time lately to a study of some foreign phases of the complications on which we had been working and he was well stocked with information.

"The stranglers," he began. "Have you ever read much of the stranglers, Healy?"

I confessed that I had not. I did have some recollection of some very ghastly pictures in a boyhood book, but that was so long ago I could not remember much about it, no matter how hard I tried.

"You think it was a strangler, then," I ventured, "who murdered Prodbury?"

He blew a whiff of smoke against the window and shook his head with that characteristic decisiveness of his.

"No, Healy," he said, "it was not a strangler who pulled the rope around the old collector's neck. It wasn't anybody at all."

"Suicide!" I exclaimed. "You mean Prodbury ended his own life?"

"No!" Inspector Gray seemed to delight in bedeviling me with his puzzles. "No!" he repeated. "It would have been absolutely impossible for him to have killed himself that way. The study of the stranglers, Healy, is a very interesting occupation—especially for a detective."

I began to long for our arrival in Philadelphia, where I could, at least, put my hands on something tangible.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

OUR PRISONER

IT was about two o'clock in the afternoon when our train roared into Broad street station, and it was only a very few moments later that we stood at the eastern facade, where Inspector Gray made inquiries at the telegraph desk. To his evident satisfaction, an envelope was handed him, and he opened it hurriedly.

"I knew it!" he exclaimed under his breath. "It couldn't have been otherwise."

We came out at the busy entrance, just across from the city hall, and made our way down Filbert street. Just under the shadow of one of the famous newspaper offices there we espied a charming little restaurant and the inspector insisted that we go in and get a bite to eat.

"There is really no hurry, you know," he said affably. "And I need time to decide on a plan of operations. There might be difficulties, you see, Healy, in trying to arrest a strangler, when you haven't any extradition papers, or warrant, or anything else. We've got to do this thing by a magnificent case of bluff. And in doing it, we would best wait for darkness."

"Do you mean to tell me," I demanded, "that we can't make an arrest in this case until night?"

"That is exactly what I mean. The man who has done this crime is a most resourceful devil, and he will leave nothing undone to prevent being captured. He knows all about you and I—of that I am convinced. Never mind how he knows. He does know. That is the big and vital thing. If we were to walk up the front steps of his own house, we would instantly be recognized, and while we were cooling our heels in his front parlor he would have skipped out the back way, and we would then have the very devil of a time trying to find him. No, we must take him by surprise, and it is infinitely better to do so under the cover of darkness, where our chances of being seen and recognized two blocks away are very considerably lessened. That is common sense."

He was the doctor, and I did not demur. But if it had been me, I would have made tracks for that house

the minute I landed in the city of brotherly love, and taken my chances on the criminal escaping. I told Nellie that the other day and she answered that that was just the reason I was Healy and he was inspector. Women have a queer way of putting things at times.

It was three o'clock when we came out of the restaurant, and a fine, drizzling rain began to fall. It grew very dark and cloudy, and the weather was quite disagreeable. I suggested that we go down to police headquarters and make ourselves acquainted.

"The very way to queer our own job," said the inspector, with finality in his tone. "These Quaker cops will then try to grab the credit for our work. Nothing doing. There has been enough publicity in this affair to make a man's reputation, and the way those fellows would fix it with the newspaper guys, why, where would we be? We would be in the 'also ran' class, Healy, my boy. No, sir. We will stick around and look wise until nightfall. In fact, the best thing we can do is to hide. And the best place for any man to hide is in a moving picture parlor."

That was the first time I had seen a moving picture show since the summer before, when I took two weeks' straight vacation. Nellie takes the kids every Friday night, and she thinks they are great. But I can't see it. We were watching a detective story and the detective in that film was certainly a hero. He changed his face every time he went anywhere, and the criminals never recognized him, although the inspector and I picked him out, no matter what kind of wig, beard and clothes he put on. When I contrasted the keen, practical man sitting beside me with that actor in the pictures, and then compared the simplicity of the crime the scenario presented against the baffling hideousness of the mystery Gray was up against, I said to myself, said I: "The fellow that argued about truth being stranger than fiction certainly knew what he was talking about."

Just before this film detective, disguised as a lion, had gotten into the man-eating animal cage at the zoo, and was waiting to rescue the beautiful heroine who was to be thrown to the lions by the villain, who was a khedive, or something like that, Inspector Gray looked at his watch. He turned to me, with a nod, and we clambered out, relieved to be free from the incessant pounding of a tuneless piano.

In the lobby the inspector turned to me and, drawing me to one side, murmured, so that no one else might hear: "You've got to be on your guard from this moment on, Healy. We're up against a dangerous man. He will be ready with a bag of tricks and we don't know what he has in the bag or up his sleeve. He's a devil, Healy, and he's clever. Distrust everything that he does. Don't give him a chance. And do what I tell you to do on the instant."

I assured him that I would follow his advice. Without another word, we strode off, boarding a car that took us far out into the suburbs. I heard Inspector Gray ask if the car went to Forrest Hill and the guard replied that it did. There was no further conversation between us on the way back.

"Forrest Hill avenue," the conductor called out, looking hard at us, and we promptly got off the car. As it bounded away from us, leaving us standing beside the tracks, I made a quick appraisal of the lay of the land. Evidently Forrest Hill was one of those exclusive, aristocratic outgrowths of the big city which, in every part of the country, have sprung up, as if by magic, in recent years. We were after big game, if our enemy lived in this place. The gleaming, lighted windows of fine mansions, surrounded with spacious grounds, stretched off far down and up the roadway, and there was an almost continuous procession of automobiles.

Inspector Gray seemed a little puzzled how to proceed. Then he consulted a memorandum in his pocket, after which he glanced swiftly all around. He was satisfied, and, jerking his head toward me, he started across the road. When we had reached the other side, he turned

sharply to the left, walking as fast as he could without attracting the attention of any one who might be observing us. We passed a great many imposing mansions and came at last to one before which Inspector Gray halted, a restraining hand touching my wrist at the same moment.

His face, as he turned toward me with a cautioning smile, told me that this was our destination. It was a very ornate building of Carrara marble, designed by an architect with an evident fondness for the opulent eloquence of the Corinthians. Its approach was a long, slowly ascending series of granite steps, with a grassy hedge at either side, and through its wide portals one might easily have driven an automobile.

None of its windows were lighted. All was quiet and darkness; there was no sign to show that any one was at home. This, however, did not seem to disturb my chief. With a cautious, but not a trepid stride, he walked swiftly up the pathway to the steps and into the broad vestibule. He did not press the electric bell button, or make his presence known to the inmates in any way. Instead, he stepped up to the door and tried it, carefully and noiselessly. Satisfied that it was locked, he drew from his pocket a small key and fitted it into the lock. Though I was at his elbow, I did not hear a sound. He turned it and the lock flew back. The door dropped noiselessly inward; we were free to go into the house.

This, I might remark in passing, was the famous key which Harry Houdini, the handcuff king, presented Inspector Gray. It will open practically any lock in existence.

We stepped in, noiselessly, and found ourselves in a handsomely furnished hallway. Inspector Gray put his fingers to his lips and we made for the stairway. But we got no farther.

"Hands up!"

A man had suddenly appeared at the farther end of the hallway. He was a tall man, with a bushy head of white hair. His face was fierce and commanding, and he leveled at us an ugly automatic.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE CELEBRATED MR. GLEASON

THE weapon has never been tempered with which to daunt Inspector Gray.

"Drop your little fire-shooter, Gleason," he snarled, facing the white-haired man squarely and defiantly. "You know what I am here for, and it will only mean more trouble for you if you try to start a battle now."

Gleason—as Gray had called him—did not seem to be much impressed at the detective's words, somewhat to my surprise. I wondered how fully he was informed. We had fancied ourselves secure from observation in entering the house, and the man had come upon us with disconcerting suddenness. Now Gray was trying to make him believe that we had reinforcements outside; that the house was surrounded, and he was doing this, cleverly enough, by inferring it, without playing it directly as a trump. Yet Gleason was not, by any word or gesture, intimidated.

Instead, at the mention of possible trouble, a crafty light came into his eyes. He put his head a little to one side, almost quizzically, and allowed the muzzle of the firearm to drop a trifle. When he spoke his voice was soft and melodious.

"You know my name," he commented, almost wistfully. "You are, indeed, well informed, especially for intruders, who insert skeleton keys to the front-door locks of honest, peaceable, law-abiding citizens. May I inquire what you purpose doing in my dwelling?"

Inspector Gray permitted himself the luxury of a short, mirthless chuckle.

"For one thing, Gleason, I've come for the key you've got in your trousers pocket," he said meaningly. He

purred the words, watching the man at the hallway door narrowly as he spoke. If he had hoped, by this mysterious illusion to draw fire, he failed. The white-haired man raised one hand protestingly.

"My time is valuable," he retorted softly. "I am at work on a most important manuscript, and I cannot be annoyed or delayed. I must pray you to state the reason for your extraordinary conduct without any additional conversation. Kindly do not deal with enigmas. For the present, your very presence in my hallway is sufficient."

"My business here concerns you in several ways," answered Gray, a hard note already adding an acid touch to his words. "For one thing, it concerns the disappearance of several and sundry things from the house at Bare Hills, New York. For another, it concerns the murder of their proprietor, Mortimer Prodbury!"

"It's a lie! It was never—"

Gleason bit his lips, and a tiny splotch of blood came there. Just at the crucial moment he had checked himself from saying something he would have choked rather than have spoken. Inspector Gray smiled a little triumphantly.

"I think, Gleason, you had better put on your hat and come with me," he coaxed.

Again that crafty look came to the eyes of Gleason, and the smile that had been lurking at the corners of his mouth came and went with almost elfin effect, as if a little devil were playing hide-and-seek around his face.

"I am persuaded, gentlemen," said Gleason, as if humoring two boys, "that you are having a little vulgar fun with one whose life is spent close to specimens, books and treasures of a hoary past. Either that—either you are punning, gentlemen—or else you are making a very serious mistake, the consequences of which I would recommend that you consider well before you say another word."

He still retained his revolver, and he still kept a wary eye on both of us. Had either of us made a move toward our hip pocket, or a step toward him, by the secret light that glittered balefully every second or so in his deep-set eyes I would have sworn he would have shot us down. For all his calm exterior, he was a desperate man, and I saw that he was resolved not to be taken.

"Then you refuse to come peaceably with me?" demanded Inspector Gray, the threat in his voice no longer hidden.

"I do. But won't you come into my little den, my retreat—my workshop, if you will have it so—and talk things over? With a glass of sparkling Burgundy, some choice cigars, and no real hostility on either side, there is no reason we should not adjust our present misunderstanding. For that is what is wrong, I am sure. We are talking at cross purposes. We do not understand each other as is driving at. Let us get acquainted. Let us understand each other—and then, for heaven's sake, apologize and go home, so that I can finish my work."

It was inimitable the way Gleason got that off. He was a past-master in the art of acting. Later I learned that in his early life he had been successful as a player of character parts with several stock companies. Seeing his innocent, injured expression, hearing the persuasive earnestness of his speech, I was tempted to wonder if Inspector Gray had, after all, made a mistake. But the memory of that elfin leer, and that deep-set, icy glitter of fear and hatred in his eyes, reassured me. Here was a clever actor, that was all. I felt in my heart that Gray had not erred, and I knew he was playing his cards carefully, for there were more difficulties ahead of us than the mere menace of a dangerous weapon in the hands of our enemy.

"Let's talk things over," finished Gleason amiably.

To my surprise, Inspector Gray agreed.

"We'll go you on that, Gleason," he said. "You can tell me whatever story you want. If you can convince

me that I am mistaken, I will shake your hand, apologize, and go away and let you finish your work."

"Nothing could be fairer," admitted Gleason, well pleased. "If you will just follow, me—or, pardon, just wait here one second."

He vanished into the shadows that lay beyond the hallway, and we heard his feet, encased in library slippers, pattering along the hardwood floor. Then came the sound of a knob turning and far away a light was flashed on, a dim echo of its radiance splashing in a mirror at the end of the corridor. By no sign did Inspector Gray indicate anything to me. He feared—as did I—that we were being watched by unseen eyes. Consequently, no kind of communication passed between us while Gleason was away, and we made no attempt to draw our weapons.

As unexpectedly as when he had first found us, about to mount the stairs, the owner of the house reappeared. His white head seemed to pop between the curtains at the entrance. There was an almost beatific smile adorning face now, a smile he made no effort to conceal. Evidently he was in high good spirits that the situation was playing so well into his hands. I made up my mind to be careful.

He led us down the corridor to a door, through which he passed, humming a gay little tune. Moving more slowly, we followed him, Inspector Gray leading the way. We found ourselves in a queerly furnished room; evidently the lair of a profound scholar of the most eccentric and barbaric tastes. There was a desk piled high with papers, books and magazines. Everything was laden inches thick with dust.

"The place needs an airing," Gleason apologized, bustling around and putting things straight, stopping every now and then to blow the dust from his fingers. "You see, I have just returned to-day. I've been away for three years."

"I know all about it," grated Inspector Gray significantly. Gleason apparently did not notice. He was busy wheeling out a large easy-chair, which he rolled invitingly forward while he smiled benignantly at Inspector Gray.

"Have a seat!" he said sweetly.

"No, thanks!" replied the inspector. "I am not tired."

"Perhaps your friend—"

While he had been looking at the inspector, I had been figuring things out. I was certain that if I could sit in that chair, and Inspector Gray stood in his present position, I could complete what the military critics call an enveloping movement, take Gleason by surprise and overwhelm him before he was aware what had befallen him. With this object in mind, I stepped forward with a muttered word of thanks. But before I had taken my seat, Inspector Gray had caught my arm, as if it were in a vise.

"Healy, don't you dare!" he roared.

I stepped quickly back and instinctively saluted. But I was sorely puzzled to understand him. So, evidently, was Gleason, for he rubbed his hands and inquired, with a queer expression, what the object of such a vocal explosion could possibly be.

"You know well enough," snapped the inspector. "I take no chances—with stranglers and their death traps!"

A little startled scream of hate came from the lips of Gleason. With an unexpected strength, he dropped his revolver and hurled himself at Inspector Gray, a gleaming dagger in his uplifted left hand.

Before he could strike, I had caught his wrist and twisted it backward. So thin and brittle was his arm, it would have snapped if I had exerted all my strength. Froth covered his lips and his eyes held the haunted terror of a maniac. His fingers worked helplessly, clutching, convulsively. But in my grip he was helpless.

Then Inspector Gray clamped the handcuffs on him.

"I suspected this individual all along, had him watched and knew just where he hung out," said Gray.

We caught the nine o'clock express back to New York.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

ANOTHER MIDNIGHT AT BARE HILLS

PRECISELY at midnight on the evening of the day that Mortimer Prodbury was laid to rest in Mt. Glennuck Cemetery, there was gathered a strange party in the library of the murdered collector of Indian relics.

Before we had boarded the train at West Philadelphia, Inspector Gray had sent several telegraph messages. As a result, when we reached New York City, the department automobile was waiting for us at the Seventh avenue entrance to the Pennsylvania terminal. In this we were taken at great speed out to Bare Hills, where we were admitted by a very excited and anxious Mrs. Hudson.

She conducted us upstairs to the study, where we found that Eleanor Strong and her brother John were seated, surrounded by the coroner, the district attorney, Patrolman Merkle and the servants of the household. But I looked in vain for Adam Rider.

Eleanor Strong looked very proud and happy, and John Strong looked very honest and very man-like. The officials all stood up as Inspector Gray entered, and they stared with unconcealed curiosity as I led in my manacled prisoner. All the way up from Philadelphia he had maintained a stony silence, broken but once. That was near Trenton, when he turned to me and said severely:

"This is not legal. You have shown me no warrant. I doubt very much if you have one. For reasons of my own, however, I am submitting, though an outcry would release me."

So far as the thing being illegal went, he was entirely right.

I stood, a little in from the doorway, watching my prisoner closely, for I knew he was a clever man, and that he might be up to all sorts of tricks. I meant to give him no opportunity to escape, now that we had brought him safely back to what I was certain was the scene of his crime.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen," said Inspector Gray, with that Chesterfieldian air of his which he wears on special occasions. I noticed that he had a particularly bright smile for Eleanor Strong, and that he deliberately walked up to John Strong and shook hands with him. However, I had begun to lose my capacity for surprise at his actions altogether. This case had smashed nearly every precedent which had seemed to guide him in the past.

"I have brought back the murderer of Mortimer Prodbury," said the inspector soberly, when every one had taken seats again. "This is the celebrated Prof. Ichabod Gleason, my friends, a man whose reputation in the scientific world entitles him to your recognition without any further words of introduction. I have brought him out here, instead of taking him to headquarters, for the simple reason that I am hoping to have this entire unhappy matter settled and fully explained to-night—now and here. And I am counting on some material assistance from our prisoner here. Professor Gleason—or is it doctor—"

"Dector will suffice," replied Gleason severely.

"Doctor Gleason, will you be so good as to take a seat?"

We all watched the actions of Inspector Gray at this critical juncture. Something seemed to tell us that we were at the apex of the whole stern, tragic mystery. The detective went over to one corner of the study and wheeled forward the chair in which Mortimer Prodbury had been seated when he was strangled to death. With a set, accusing smile, Gray offered it to Gleason.

The white-haired professor accepted the invitation with an odd sort of alacrity. As I released my grip on his sleeve, at a nod from the inspector, he stepped forward into the circle of curious onlookers and almost stumbled over to the chair. With a weary little smile, he threw himself into it, and then looked upon all those around him, just as I have seen tigers do behind cage bars.

"All this is most extraordinary," he complained with

bitterness. "Two strange men enter my home, by forcing the lock of my front door. They overpower me. They force me to accompany them here; they bring me into this strange room, before a lot of strange people, and accuse me of a strange crime, of which I have no remembrance. Have I no rights as a citizen?"

The silence that followed his whining was acute. I expected Inspector Gray to prod him on with some guilty questions, but even he was silent. He was playing his cards well. A master of psychology, though one would never suspect it, he knew exactly the effect all this silence would have on the man. He was using silent forces to break his resistance, and in a few moments we were to see that he was succeeding.

"All this will eventually wind up in a court of law—or order—where I will find justice," resumed Gleason. "Unless, indeed, there is some scurvy trick behind all this farce, and I am expected to pay you money for my release."

There was an eager question in his words now, as if he were hoping a bribe might help him. He was twitching and squirming in his chair. Truly he was a pitiable figure! But still the terrible silence filled the air, and no one replied to him. He let his gaze rest balefully on me, and then it traveled around the room, from one to the other. A peculiarly fiendish and sinister glare came into his eyes as he looked upon John Strong. It was as if his hate for the young man was overwhelming, overpowering. He had to shake himself to free his own eyes from the intensity of that gaze, so that he could complete the circle of his vision.

Each moment he was growing more wrought up, more unstrung, less the master of his own tempestuous emotions. At last he raised a hand to his throat and smoothed and clutched it, as if he were trying to get his breath. Then a groan came from him, and he sat up, tragically, and glared at Gray.

"You win, damn you, you win," he cried hoarsely. "How you found it out I can't guess. But I admit it—you win! I killed Mortimer Prodbury, and I'm glad I did it, and I wish I could do it over and over again!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE CONFESSION

IT so happened that Coroner Blake, who had been summoned through one of Inspector Gray's telegrams, was a stenographer in his younger days, and at the request of the inspector he kindly consented to take down the words that now rushed like a torrent from the purpling lips of Ichabod Gleason.

As this is intended to be a truthful record for the public, I do not think I can acquire myself better of my task than to set down here, just as Dr. Blake took it down, the statement of Gleason made at midnight at Bare Hills, in the presence of those of us directly interested in the case. It will be seen that this explanation of Gleason was only partial. It left many things hidden; important, indeed vital, phases of the case which only the genius of Inspector Gray had unraveled. But this was the beginning of the dawn; it showed us the way, and though Gleason's admissions were neither lengthy nor very illuminating, they nevertheless cleared the way for the exoneration of the unjustly suspected, and gave the confirmation that might be needed in the courts for the splendid, theoretical structure which Inspector Gray had erected by his own deductions.

The statement of Ichabod Gleason, A.M., Ph.D., etc., etc., therefore follows, complete:

"My name is Ichabod Elijah Gleason. I am 49 years old. I am the foremost living authority on the subject of East Indian history in the world. I have devoted more brains, more labor, more money to the unearthing of secret things about India than any other man living

or dead. Beside my labors, the puny work of Mortimer Prodbury is small, mean and insignificant. He was a thief and a traitor. He stole my collection, my reputation and all the fruits of my toil.

"That was years ago, when we were partners, in Singapore. We started out from the States together, with the intention of pooling our work. We would make exhaustive original research, and then come back, turn our acquisitions over to a museum, after embodying their essentials in what we determined should be the greatest book on the subject of India ever compiled in any language. I was still a young man then and my faith in human nature had not been destroyed. I believed in Mortimer Prodbury. I believed he would do all that he said he would do. And it was a long time before I was convinced that he was my worst enemy, instead of my best friend.

"Without my help, Prodbury could have done nothing. In both intelligence and in training he was vastly my inferior. He knew this, and when we were alone he frequently admitted it. But when we were out among other people, by his insolent, domineering manner, any one would have thought that he was the chief of the expedition, and that I had come along to carry his baggage, or be his valet.

"After all our work was done—after that magnificent collection was practically complete, and we were passing down to a seaport to start for home—I was suddenly taken ill. I was down with one of the most dangerous fevers one can take on in that malarial-ruled land of India. For weeks I poised my foot over the brink of death. I raved in my delirium. I nearly starved for nourishment and for the lack of the right kind of medical attention, but I held onto life. I saw no sign of Mortimer Prodbury in all that time. His face never came near the miserable native hospital where I had been taken, not out of mercy to me, but because of fear of my malady spreading throughout the town.

"At last I got well. At first I was convalescent. I could walk around the streets for a little while, and then I would be forced to sit down and rest. I made all sorts of inquiries for Prodbury, and at last I found out that the day after I had been taken ill he had sailed for America.

"Even this did not open my eyes to the awful truth. I made all sorts of explanations and excuses for him to myself. I do not believe that treachery ever suggested itself to me. I was so sure that something else was wrong. I supposed for a time that he had considered me dead when he sailed. Even at that, I could not understand why he did not make some effort to have me decently buried. So far as I could learn, he had made absolutely no inquiries concerning me, after having learned that I had been taken to the hospital. Still I argued to myself that even this could be explained. The doctors were a unit in informing me that not one man in five hundred ever recovers from the fever which I had been stricken with, especially among the white race. I was the marvel of the hospital.

"There came a day, however, when I learned the real truth. I was sitting in front of the hospital, late in the afternoon, wondering how on earth I was going to get back to America, for I was penniless, when a horrible old woman, all covered with scars and pox marks, and clad in the filthiest garments, crawled slowly up to me and made me a wide salaam. I understood the language fairly well by this time, and in the first dialect that occurred to me I addressed her and told her not to come begging around me; that if I didn't get any money, I would soon be a beggar myself.

"She rolled her eyes very queerly and told me she had not come for money; that she had not come to ask for anything; that she had come to give me something. Her manner was so unusual that I asked her, rather roughly, what was the matter with her. She answered that she had cursed a man not long ago; that she had fastened on him the deadly plague of the evil eye, and that that

man was my worst enemy, and that I should be the instrument for the working out of that curse.

"Her speech was very earnest—almost deadly in its earnestness—and it impressed me very deeply. I asked her what she meant. She said, in her native tongue, 'I mean the Sahib Prodburee!'

"I was not willing even then to hear ill of the man who had deserted me. I told her to get away. I said, 'To hell with you and your curses.' But she shook her head slowly and told me I did not understand. Then I asked her to tell me, for I was getting interested in spite of myself, and she leaned forward and whispered something that chilled the very marrow in my bones.

"Prodbury had tried to murder me. My fever had been given me by him—the deadliest fever in India. He had deliberately secured the germs through this old devil woman, as they call them out there. He had told her he was a doctor and wanted them for an experiment. He had bought those germs, and she had seen him when he dropped them in the water which he gave me to drink with the smile of a friend. She saw me fall backward, not two minutes later—for the attack of the fever is instantaneous. She had tried to expose Prodbury, but he had been too clever for her, and no one believed her, or would listen to her. As a result, Prodbury escaped back to the States, and I was left to die.

"But before he went, Prodbury had heard that vindictive old woman launch upon him the curse of the evil eye, than which none other is half so deeply feared in India. He had carried that away in his heart, though I have since learned that he did not take it seriously until it became a real and serious problem, through the machinations of my own cunning hands. But that is another story.

"I kissed that old hag for telling me the truth, and I promised her that I should see that her curse did not fall short of its victim. I went to China and— But no! Let the great detective tell you the rest. Let the cunning Mr. Gray inform you of what happened later. He has ferreted it all out; from what he said, I know there is no important detail which is not clear already in his mind. Is it not so, inspector?"

There was a ghastly grin on Gleason's face as he asked the question. In reply, the inspector nodded his head with a tolerant little smile.

"I think I know the whole case now, Dr. Gleason," he said confidently.

"Then why should I delay any longer? It would be a big piece of foolishness—that is what it would be!"

There was a querulous, almost childish petulance in Dr. Gleason's tone, as he cast glances that asked confirmation of his reasoning from every one in the room. Then, before any one could stop him, he had done a deadly thing.

It is as clear before me now as if every move of that awful three seconds had been focussed and photographed on my brain. I saw Ichabod Gleason press his foot on the sloping rest at the base of the chair. Instantly there was a whirring, buzzing sound and a flap in the thick back of the chair opened. With a swishing, curling, hissing sound, a rope whizzed out, uncoiling from some powerful, hidden spring. There was a loop at the end that settled unerringly around the neck of the white-haired, white-faced man in the chair of death. All in that same wild instant the noose, controlled by the chair, which was stretching into a lengthwise, lying position, was pulled swiftly back. It tightened around the neck of Ichabod Gleason; the knot jammed beneath his ear; there was a gurgling sound and the body writhed.

Inspector Gray broke from his trance before the rest of us had moved. He darted to the figure in the chair and began struggling with the rope. Dr. Blake was at his side a second later.

"It's too late," the coroner murmured. "His neck is broken."

The spell of wonderment was on us all. It had come so suddenly, so swiftly, from a quarter which not one

of us—with the exception of Inspector Gray—had suspected. It left us stupefied. In a daze, I heard the inspector remark:

"A strange, poetic justice, indeed. For the murderer is killed by the very engine he built for the destruction of his enemy. Mortimer Prodbury's murder is avenged."

It was then that Eleanor Strong's voice broke clearly on the silence. She was very agitated, and her voice was shrill and clear:

"But what of Uncle Adam Rider?" she asked.

Inspector Gray gazed upon her pityingly.

"This man was Adam Rider," he said at last.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

INSPECTOR GRAY EXPLAINS

"A S brilliantly and deliberately planned crime as I have ever heard of. It is unique in the annals of the wrong-doing of mankind."

It was thus that Inspector Gray summed up the murder mystery of Mortimer Prodbury. I agreed with him. I was still completely in the dark in regard to the major elements of the case. I knew just as much as the reader knows now. I knew that Gleason had killed Prodbury and that Gleason was also Adam Rider. Beyond that I was still entirely aghast. The extraordinary developments of the case, including the things that had turned upside-down, were as deep an enigma now as they had ever been. Consequently I was not disposed to dispute the assertion of the inspector. Certainly it was the most baffling affair in which I had ever been concerned, and I had been on the force then more years than I liked to think about.

I was happy, for the solution of all the strange happenings was now at hand. As soon as the formalities consequent upon the unexpected death of Adam Rider, as I shall always call him in my own mind, had been attended to, Inspector Gray had caught my arm and quietly informed me that I was under arrest. When I blinked in astonishment, he condescended to explain that although the hour was late, we were going somewhere to get a bite to eat, and I knew where that meant. It meant some outlandish restaurant.

The inspector is a fanatic on the subject of restaurants. He is what I would call a restaurantologist. He collects them. He is always happy when he comes upon one in which he has never eaten. French dining-room, English tea-places and chop-houses, Italian upper halls, Hungarian cellars—he tried them all, and passed judgment upon them. To-night, however, he was to introduce me to a new place.

"Down on Forty-second street, west of Broadway," he told me, as we climbed back into the department machine, "there is a place that is strictly in the atmosphere of our present business. I haven't such a wonderful imagination, Healy, but what I have is sufficient to tell me that is the logical place, this night of all nights in the year."

With this tantalizing hint, I was forced to be content. I knew the inspector well enough to understand that no questions would be answered, except by enigmatic replies. So I wisely kept silent, and so we did not talk during all our ride back into New York.

As we turned in from Seventh avenue, I looked around in vain for some sign which would give me a hint, but it was not until, at the side of the inspector, I stood before the door of the place that I understood. We entered a vestibule and mounted a stairs, and as I mounted the steps I read the sign—"Burma Restaurant."

An East Indian eating place! And yet Inspector Gray had protested that he did not have imagination.

We enjoyed the meal, with its strange curries, and its inevitable suggestion of olive oil, even in the coffee. But

it was not until we had lighted our cigars—though narghiles would have been more appropriate—that Inspector Gray was ready to spin his yarn.

He began abruptly:

"In order to gain some practical good from this case, Healy," he started, "you should follow my line of work and reasoning from the beginning. Then you can trace the several threads which I followed out, in the course of my investigation. The only place to begin, then, is at headquarters, when we received our first knowledge that Mortimer Prodbury had been murdered. You remember that I went to the telephone, and that I said, 'Rider, who killed him?'"

"That was a trick in psychology. It had a two-fold value. If Rider, of whom we at that time knew nothing at all, were guilty, he might betray himself in some way. If, on the other hand, he knew and were trying to shield some one, the unexpectedness of that question might startle him into saying something leading. That was the object. It is always well to try it when you get hold of the person who found the body, just after the crime. In this case the result was only partly satisfactory. All that I got was a pause—but there are times when a pause, a waiting moment, may be inexpressibly eloquent. Adam Rider had to pause and frame a reply to that question. Then, after that noticeable hesitation, he said he did not have any idea. That determined me to keep an eye on Adam Rider. So, although not knowing it at the time, I had begun to watch the real murderer, before leaving headquarters."

"We had learned another important point. Rider told me over the telephone that his cousin had been strangled to death with a small cord. Strangulation is an essentially Oriental form of murder. Coupled with my previous knowledge of Mortimer Prodbury's career, I felt fairly safe in assuming that his eastern adventures were in some way connected with the crime."

"When we reached Bare Hills, you recall that we found Adam Rider laughing on the porch. Now that presented a unique problem in psychology. It meant one of two things. No man, with any sense at all, who has committed a crime like that, would have walked out on a porch, when he knew the police were coming, and laughed over his bloody work. He would not do it—unless he had an object, or unless he was mad. I might have been willing to believe Rider mad if he had not already waited so cautiously before answering my question about who did the killing. These were very little things, but they set my mind working in the right direction, after I had observed them."

"In the brief time that elapsed between our first sight of Rider on the porch and when he recognized us, I racked my mind to find an explanation, assuming him to be sane and possibly guilty. Why should he laugh, and try to be seen laughing. As we walked up the steps, and he allowed us to see him grinning covertly to himself—for he did it on purpose, Healy; he wanted us to see him—it became evident to me that he was apparently trying to direct suspicion to himself, even before he had shown us the body."

"But my mind refused to suggest any reason for such altogether extraordinary conduct, until he caught my hand and assured me that he would try to help me. That was when I sent him from the room to gather together the members of the household. Then I knew a possible explanation. To prove it, however, a little later, I sprang that bluff about palmistry, which astonished you so much, and I was convinced. His hands proclaimed one fact to me, beyond any shadow of a doubt. They told me that Adam Rider was twenty years younger, and possibly more, than he seemed to be."

"I knew then that he was a disguised man. Cleverly disguised, I will admit. He had actually starved himself. I have learned from questioning the cook and Mrs. Hudson, in order, no doubt, to acquire the pale face. His wig was as artistic as anything crook ever wore. His bleared eyes would have deceived a physician. Of

those eyes I shall have more to tell you later on. But he could not disguise his hands.

"It is a fact, which you can prove to your own satisfaction at any time, Healy, that the skin of a man's hand—the back of his hand—proclaims his age more certainly than any other portion of the body. A woman, for instance, may powder and cosmetic her face as much as she pleases—but there is no art that will make the satiny skin on the back of her hands as soft and velvety as it was when she was a girl. Now, Rider's hand showed me that he was not anything like as old as he pretended to be. Result: I had gained another fact, of almost damning importance. This led me to scrutinize him more carefully, and I began to notice little artificial touches about his face. For all the cleverness of his make-up, there were flaws there when you looked for them. From that moment on, I knew I must watch that man.

"But Adam Rider, as we learned later on, had an alibi—a beautiful alibi. You couldn't break it to save your life. Therefore, it became necessary to move with the utmost caution. Merely to prove that this scheming old fellow was wearing a wig would not convict him of the murder. That was why I let him alone. I wanted to give him enough rope to hang himself—and what I speak of figuratively, he did, as you know, actually. I feel a personal responsibility for that fact. However, to continue in chronological sequence:

"We proceeded with our examination of the crime and binglo! We ran into a new mystery. The pictures were upside-down. The handwriting on Prodbury's forehead—the word Karma, you remember—was written backward. I may tell you honestly that I was not so very much puzzled at that feature. The explanation of it suggested itself to me, as soon as I asked myself if there were any possible explanation. And there was. But I will reserve it for just a little while longer—I like to see you mystified, Healy!"

I squirmed in my chair, and he proceeded:

"We found the rose leaves in the chair, and for a while that looked bad for Miss Eleanor Strong. Her excited heroics also contributed to direct suspicion against her, to one who did not already understand that Adam Rider was wearing a wig. Then, when I found the cuff-link of John Strong, things in that quarter cleared up a bit. Those voices which Eleanor Strong had said she heard in the library—the loud quarreling voices—were an invention. She had not heard them at all. She was trying to cover up the fact that her brother had been there.

"Before Miss Strong went to bed, I slipped from the room and had a quiet little talk with her, and found that my assumption had really been correct. I learned from her, also, that her brother had decided to leave the city, to seek enlistment somewhere, she was not sure where, without his uncle's permission. I told her the only way to get him back, and she consented. I also told her that he was not guilty, but that, if suspicion were allowed to rest on him, the guilty party would be lured into a false sense of security, and so we would succeed in proving his guilt. I found that Miss Strong was a most exceptionable young woman. She both understood the necessity for such precautions, and most willingly acquiesced in them. It was, therefore, with her full permission, that I telephoned the newspapers, our object being to secure the return of her brother. As you know, the plan worked admirably.

"However, we are anticipating again. You remember that Mrs. Hudson had spoken of a tall foreigner, who had called—apparently an East Indian. I postulated—as a working hypothesis—that he, too, was Rider. Rider, with a black wig, instead of a white one; Rider, with a dark stain on his face; Rider, with his false hump removed; Rider, tall, erect and still with some vigor of his youth remaining. Supposing this were true, I asked myself, why should he do it? And automatically, as if I had set, for the moment, my mind in his.

"Adam Rider was diving under Mortimer Prodbury's

roof for a purpose. Until that purpose was accomplished, he was in some danger of discovery. Eventually he wished the man Rider to be suspected, but there must be some one else to keep the police mind occupied as well. Hence, the strange East Indian visitor, who terrified the conscience-stricken Mortimer Prodbury with his languid threats about the evil eye. This superstition, by the way, Rider had carefully fostered during his stay in the household. A little later Adam Rider, as we knew him, would disappear. The real personality, within that stooping form, under that gray wig, would emerge elsewhere, unsuspected. The police would understand that Adam Rider did the crime. But the criminal—he would escape and be free!

"Such the hypothetical plan, and I evolved it in my mind. The motive, to me, was evident. Revenge, for one thing; possession of that priceless collection of Prodbury's another. The two together were certainly strong enough. But that plan would have succeeded, Healy, but for that one tiny clue—the back of Adam Rider's hand.

"Mrs. Hudson remembered that Ram Singh's hands were soft, too. That was a tiny confirmation of my theory, and I decided, enthusiastically, to follow it out to its logical conclusion. But, in so doing, I did not underestimate the possibilities that lay outside of such reasoning. I had every effort made to find the real Ram Singh, but with the close watch the immigration officials have kept since the beginning of the war, it was an easy matter for me to establish the fact that no such man was in the country.

"The next thing we learned was the fact that the celebrated black pearl was missing from its case, and that the case was upside-down. This helped still further to confirm my line of reasoning. The fact that it was upside-down, however, was beginning to annoy me, and I determined to make a test. It was a test that fully settled that matter in my mind, and I shall tell you about it at the proper time.

"Of course, the big mystery still remained staring us in the face. Prodbury had been murdered in a room that practically was sealed. For the moment, I put this out of my mind. I would collect all the data, and then bring it to bear on the problem. Accordingly, I next began to examine Adam Rider.

"His story about having gone abroad in his youth with Prodbury, and then having remained in China was a convincing one, and was backed up by subsequent outside investigations I made. As a story, it was perfectly true. Adam Rider—the real one, the real cousin of Prodbury, had done all those things. But a cablegram I received this morning from the American consul in Peking informed me that the real Adam Rider died over there two and a half years ago, just one week before the letter was written to Prodbury, saying that Rider was coming home.

"It was evident that Rider hadn't written it, for he was dead. Moreover, my examination had satisfied me that, clever as it was, that last letter was a forgery. We know now that Gleason must have been in China; must have gone there, in fact, still enraged at Prodbury's treachery, and arrived a short time before Adam Rider died. He kept this fact from being cabled home, assumed the identity of Adam Rider, and made his plan.

"It was a fiendishly clever one. He knew that Prodbury hadn't seen his cousin in forty years. He made a disguise that approximated a general outline of Rider, as Prodbury knew from his letters his cousin looked, and came to America at the earliest possible moment. For the time he specified he lived with Prodbury, plotting all the time for revenge.

"We know why he hated Prodbury. The eminent Dr. Gleason had been tricked, and nearly murdered. He wanted to murder Prodbury; he wanted to recover his possessions, and do it safely. And by playing the game as he had mapped it out, he believed he could do this, and emerge into his own personaffty secure.

"By remembering what Mrs. Hudson had said of the visit of Ram Singh, I was able to startle the coroner by a fairly accurate description of the murderer, though I admitted truthfully at that time I did not know who he was. This, however, was not difficult to determine. I had to find out what celebrated student of East Indian antiquities, who had been absent from his home for several years, was expected home soon. This last, on the assumption that Rider was making his plans to disappear. There were not so many men who could answer that description in the United States. As a matter of fact, there were only two, East Indian collectors in this country of any prominence—Gleason and Prodbury. When I sent telegrams to the police all over the country, seeking this information, I was certain it would be forthcoming, and it soon was.

"The chief of police in Philadelphia wired the information about Gleason, with the added news that his servants were already preparing his house for his return. While I was securing this information, however, Rider had decided to act, without waiting, as I had calculated, for the funeral ceremonies. I wired again to Philadelphia, and when we reached Broad street station I had an exact direction about reaching Gleason's home.

"However, that is anticipating again. You will recall that I spent a great deal of time alone in the study. That was for the purpose of solving the grim secret which I was certain it held; the secret of how Prodbury was killed. I was early convinced that Adam Rider had not done it directly; the testimony was all against it. I was also not inclined to favor the belief that he had hired an assassin; it was far too unlike his other evidences of cunning.

"Then I thought of the chair. I wondered if it would be possible for one to build a strangler's death-chair, as I called it in my imagination. With that idea in my head, I set to work on a fresh examination of the chair, and it did not take me long to find it.

"Adam Rider had indeed constructed a terrible affair. You recall that the chair was what is known as a patent extension one. That is, you could sit erect in it, and then, if you wished to lie at ease, by simply pressing the foot rest, the chair extended out, and you were lying almost prone.

"This mechanism was utilized in the strangler's death-chair. So long as you sat upright, you were safe. But as soon as you pressed that foot rest, a delicate, strong and most ingenious mechanism was released. A flap in the back of the chair flew open; and a strong spring released a rope-loop which—as you saw in the case of Rider—hurled itself over the head of the person in the chair. The constantly lengthening process of the chair, as it extended outward in the ordinary course of things, drew the rope taut, strangling the man in the chair to death. You saw how Adam Rider died. That is how Prodbury also died."

"But," I interposed, "was it not necessary to load it again with rope? Else, how did Gleason get caught? And if so, who did that?"

"There, my dear Healy, was the fatal mistake, by which I, unwittingly, gave our prisoner the opportunity of executing punishment upon himself. There is a supply of rope in the chair for two or three such executions, and as soon as the chair is straightened out again it is ready for use. I overlooked this. You see, the way the thing happened was this: Prodbury was killed. Then, when Adam Rider came home, he and Mrs. Hudson opened the door and found him dead. Mrs. Hudson rushed out of the room, screaming and crying. Before that Eleanor Strong had seen him, it is true, but she had not seen enough to know that the rope around his neck was from inside the back of the chair. All she saw was her uncle dead. Now, left alone, Adam Rider released the rope, and closed the chair back, making it appear that Prodbury had been strangled to death by another man.

"There are just a few more points that remain to be explained. I wondered how so much prominence had been

given in the newspapers to the curse of the evil eye, and I found that all information about it had been slipped to the reporters by Adam Rider, in order to further complicate the situation in the public eye. The rose petals on the chair were not such a puzzle; they had fallen there when Eleanor Strong discovered the body.

"But a big thing to explain was the reason the entire household was imprisoned in the cabinet upstairs. That was because Rider wanted absolute quiet while he selected the prize stones from Prodbury's collection, before he went away. He then threw off his old man's disguise in the fields below—where they have since been found—and rushed off to his own home, in the disguise which he wore when he held up the women and asked for the whereabouts of Adam Rider. That, by the way, was a consummate piece of audacity."

I could keep my curiosity in bounds no longer.

"Yes," I exploded, "but that does not explain everything. What about the things upside-down? And why did Mörkle let all those things happen without getting wise to it? That is what puzzles me most."

"That," answered Inspector Gray, "is just what I am about to tell you."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

WHICH IS BY WAY OF AN EPILOGUE

"WHEN I examined the body of Mortimer Prodbury—which you may remember I did most intently—I found a tiny drop of blood on one of the knuckles," said Inspector Gray.

He looked at me quizzically for a moment, as if the secret he were about to unfold was almost too good to be revealed.

"It was a most remarkable drop of blood," he continued, "as contrasted with the blood on the cord, which you may remember I also examined very thoroughly. Now, the blood on the cord was clotted, coagulated, and had already begun to be discolored and to harden. On the contrary, the drop of blood on the back of the hand had not yet dried up. It, therefore, was far more recent; it had not fallen there at the time of the murder.

"I regarded that as, not unnaturally, a vital, though a very slender, indication. I made silent, judicious inquiries about it. And that estimable Mrs. Hudson, a most discreet and careful woman, told me how it had happened. As Adam Rider walked over to the body, there was a convulsive relaxation of the arm muscles, which in the final agony of death had been terribly contracted. One arm of the dead man sprang backward, and in so doing it struck Rider, or Gleason, in the eye."

"In the eye!" I echoed, now beginning dimly to sense the truth.

"In the eye, Healy. That was all the curse of the evil eye there ever was fastened on Bare Hills. It had, in this case, a totally unexpected effect, however. You know what happens if you remove one of the lenses of a telescope? Look through it, and everything that you look at appears upside-down. The human eye is, after all, nothing but a telescope of very fine flesh and blood, and the effect of the blow of that dead man's arm was practically to smash one of the lenses of the telescope.

"You saw the result for yourself. Everything that Rider looked at appeared upside-down. When he, in that fantastic moment, just after Mrs. Hudson left the room, wrote the word Karma on the dead man's forehead, he wrote it backward; otherwise he would have thought it was upside-down. He thought he was writing naturally. Then, as he glanced around him, he saw everything reversed. He rushed to the pictures and in a frenzy began putting them to rights for his own sight. He stole the black pearl and put the case upside-down in the belief that it was all right.

"That was the explanation which, I told you, occurred

to me, but it did not fit all the facts. If Rider put those things backward—in the crazy belief that he was putting them to rights again—why didn't he do the same with everything else in the room? I admitted to myself I could not answer that question. So I did the next best thing. I went to see Prof. Hipsley, who is the best-known authority on the subject in the East.

"Prof. Hipsley easily put me right on the entire matter. He said that the eye evidently was not permanently injured, but that a nerve in it had been paralyzed by the blow. This had affected the other eye sympathetically, causing the man to see things near to him as upside-down. This, added Prof. Hipsley, would pass away again in a few hours, but would recur at regular intervals, in accordance with the amount of secretions in certain glands there. That explained why such manifestations occurred only at certain times. And there, Healy, you have the entire explanation of the strange workings-out of the curse of the evil eye."

"Not all," I remonstrated. "How about Merkle? How did the coffin and those things in the parlor get turned without him knowing anything about it?"

Inspector Gray brightened considerably. "That puzzled me, too," he confessed. "But you evidently forgot that Adam Rider invited Merkle down to have a cup of coffee. You remember also that Rider spent much of his life in India. That is where they have hashesh and its by-products. When I smelled Merkle's breath, I suspected the truth. He had been drugged with

one of those singular Indian herbs, which will make a man unconscious for hours in the position in which it overtakes him. I have no doubt Merkle stood erect and unconscious at the parlor door all those two hours, while Rider, very much excited and with his cursed eyes bothering him again, walked past him, with his bag of jewels, upset everything in the room, and then made his escape."

"Oh!" said I.

There, the public has been given the true facts at last. I have tried to make it entertaining as well as truthful, and that without deviating in any tiny degree from absolutely faithful regard for the truth.

And, as I made it plain in the introduction, the story would never have been given to the public but for the resurrection of the case by the newspapers at the time of the wedding ceremony in Trinity Church. That was when Inspector Gray—always regarded as the prize bachelor of the front office—walked down the aisle with Eleanor Strong on his arm, after the minister had said the happy words.

And Nellie, who sat beside me in a front pew, whispered to me, just what I was thinking myself at the time:

"Gee, but don't they look just grand!"

"The Strange Case of Mrs. St. Leon," by Beulah Poynter, will be published in our next issue. Don't miss it.

A "FREAK BILL"

DESPITE the careful scrutiny of every bill that leaves the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, a number of "freak" notes find their way into circulation from time to time. Such a one was a note that once came to the Sub-Treasury at New York. It had the imprint of a twenty-dollar note on one side and of a ten on the other. But inasmuch as the face showed the figure twenty, twenty dollars was the legal value of the bill. In most cases the "freak" bills that have escaped the vigilance of the bureau's officials are national banknotes, which, like the regular Treasury notes, are printed there. As intimated already, the face value is always recognized when the "freaks" come to be cashed at any branch of the Treasury. The imprint on the back has no lawful status what-

soever. The notes are printed in sheets. Usually there will be one twenty and two tens on a sheet. They are printed one side at a time, so it can readily be seen that the printer, in turning over the sheet, might get it upside-down and thus put a ten-dollar back on the twenty-dollar note or a twenty on the back of one of the tens. When errors are discovered the mis-printed sheet is laid aside to be destroyed. It cannot be torn up at once, for every sheet has to be accounted for. After some formalities, it is ground into pulp. Almost all the "freak" bills that have been issued in the past have found their way back to the Treasury, there to be destroyed. It is thought that very few of them are now scattered about, and these are for the most part in the hands of curio-hunters.

TAKE NOTICE!

The feature stories that have been published in this magazine are well worth reading, if you have not already seen them. The list is as follows:

- | | |
|---|---|
| No. | No. |
| 1 THE EEL MAN, by Robert Carlton Brown | 15 AFTER A MILLION, by Police Captain Howard |
| 2 ZITANA OF MAISON ROUGE, by F. W. Doughty | 16 SHADOWING THE BLUE TRIANGLE, by Charles F. Oursler |
| 3 THE MYSTERIOUS WEB, by Armstrong Perry | 17 THE CASE OF CAPTAIN FORTESQUE, by Redfield Ingalls |
| 4 UNDER THE HYPNOTIC SPELL, by Dr. H. Enton | 18 THE BIRD-HEADED SPHINX, by Edith S. Tupper |
| 5 THE SILKEN SHEATH, by Crittenden Marriotti | 19 A DOUBLE MYSTERY, by Dr. Harry Enton |
| 6 A FORTUNE TELLER'S SECRET, by Gladys Hall | 20 THE MAGICIAN DETECTIVE, by C. F. Oursler |
| 7 THE MYSTIC EMBLEM, by Marie Coolidge Rask | 21 KING COBRA MYSTERY, by George Gilbert |
| 8 THE CARDS OF FATE, by William Goode | 22 THE HAUNTED CORRIDORS, by Wm. H. Osborne |
| 9 MR. BACHELLER'S APARTMENTS, by William Hamilton Osborne | 23 NO MAN'S MAN, by Maxwell Smith |
| 10 THE INNER WHEEL, by Octavius Roy Cohen | 24 THE TREVOR PUZZLE, by T. C. Harbaugh |
| 11 THE VOICE OF THE VALLEY, by Robt. C. Brown | 25 THE TRAIL OF ROSES, by Edmund Condon |
| 12 THE SIGN OF THE SEVEN SHARKS, by Charles F. Oursler | 26 THE HINDOO VANISHING CLUE, by Pauline Carrington Bouve |
| 13 UNDER A MASK, by Crittenden Marriotti | 27 WHO WAS GUILTY? by Beulah Poynter |
| 14 CASE 4,444, by Gladys Hall | |

If you cannot procure any of the numbers you want from your newsdealer, send us the price, ten cents, in money or postage stamps, and we will mail them to you postage free. Address

FRANK TOUSEY, Publisher, 168 West 23d St., New York.

EMPTY CAGES

By WILL H. GREENFIELD

IT was the end of a sultry summer afternoon, and a couching sun brought with long, thin shadows a promise of coolness. A man, whose hair about the temples and nape of his neck was almost milky white and whose shoulders bent with a slight stoop, walked down the east side of Kensington avenue toward the pet shop of "Big Slim" Emory. His was a peculiar gait—an involuntary shuffling of the feet and a laxness of the knees—which he seemed to be trying to conceal.

In Big Slim's window hung a sign reading: "Singing canaries for sale." The man stopped before the sign and considered it. Then his glance fell on a bench built into the window, on which in neat wicker cages a dozen or more canaries preened themselves in the sun.

The man studied the birds for a long time. He went into the store. A tall, lean, saturnine-looking man, with a hard, dry manner, and a thin-lipped, close-shut mouth—Big Slim himself—came from behind a high wooden counter.

"What do you want?" he demanded gruffly. His manner resented the intrusion.

"How much are them canaries?" asked the man. "Those canaries," he corrected himself, pointing to the window.

"I get three dollars apiece for them."

The man took a ten-dollar bill from his pocket and handed it to the scowling storekeeper.

"I'll take three," he said. Then he walked to the door and opened the cages. The canaries spread their wings and darted away. The man watched them out of sight. Big Slim watched him with assumed indifference, but the shadow of a bitter smile curved his thin hard lips.

"Not a lamister, are you?" he asked, not without a definite note of menace in his manner.

"Friend," said the stranger, "I just got through serving fifteen months in one of those things"—he pointed to the empty cages—"fifteen months in the State Penitentiary. I'm just out."

"So you advertised. But how did you get out was what I asked you. I know now, but I don't think you savvied my question."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Oh, hell!" with unrestrained expression of disgust. "You don't know what a lamister is—that's what I said."

"I'm afraid not—no, sir. I am not a crook—at least, I never have been."

Big Slim noticed the amendment with a flicker of the eyelids.

"Guess you did that fifteen for pastime," he jeered. "The dicks always throw the key away on a leveler. They never get anybody into the hoosgow that belongs there."

"I don't understand you, I'm afraid."

"Oh, don't be afraid; I'm harmless. In plain English, then, they caged an innocent man when they hid you. It's old stuff. George Washington used to hear it when he was a gosling kid."

The stranger started for the door, stopped, and came back to the counter where Big Slim stood.

"I suppose I'll have to get accustomed to hearing that from all the world," he said slowly. Then, in a low voice of concentrated passion: "It matters not what you

are thought to be, but what you are. I am as innocent as a babe unborn of any voluntary crime. All that I did was—"

"Cut it!" interrupted Big Slim impatiently. "You don't look like a hophead or a snoot boozier, but you're something of a simp at that or you would never walk in here and release them canaries. Cripes, man, you might as well advertise in the papers that you were just out of the jughouse. Did you ever make a signature for yourself—I mean, what's your name, before and after?"

"I am not ashamed of my name. I am Douglas Beaumont."

"Not 'Honest Beaumont' of Honeybrook?"

"They called me that at one time."

"I've heard something about your case, Beaumont," Big Slim's eyes were fixed on the other with hypnotic intensity. "What's that our ex-president says? 'If a man stumbles, it's a good thing to help him to his feet; but if he lies down it's a waste of time to try and carry him.' If you want to get square with the men who set you back in the shade to take root, maybe I can help you."

"I'm in a black mood, sir," said Douglas Beaumont. "I cannot feel kindly toward those who treated me like a hardened criminal."

Big Slim swept a sleeping poodle from a big arm-chair and motioned Beaumont to be seated. Then he slid backward to an easy perch on the high counter and said almost kindly: "Let's have the story, Beaumont, or as much of it as you care to tell."

Beaumont dropped into the chair vacated for him and fumbled his chin for the fraction of a minute in silence. When he spoke the tone of his voice was indifferent, and from the expression in his eyes one might have supposed his thoughts were a few thousand miles away.

"I may have done wrong," he began meekly. "I did the best I could. I was tax collector and treasurer of Honeybrook, as you doubtless know. I was found guilty and sentenced to eighteen months in prison for the larceny of town funds amounting to \$25,000. Not one cent of that was appropriated to my own use, but rather to meet outstanding taxes which threatened to expose my own peculiar style of bookkeeping."

Big Slim seemed about to interpose with a sarcastic comment, but Beaumont restrained him with his eyes.

"Let me finish, please," he continued somewhat sternly. "At the time of manipulating my accounts business was very dull in Honeybrook and many of my friends were unable to pay their taxes. I knew that if I pressed a good many of them it meant the loss of hundreds of homes and the wiping out of small bank accounts. I collected money and applied it to the accounts of those who could not pay year after year, and the two offices I held made it possible for me to transfer from one account to the other. Part of my salary was also used for this purpose. That is my story."

Big Slim's face had an expression impossible to describe as he asked:

"Didn't District Attorney Scott work pretty hard for your conviction, and didn't he know what was done with the money?"

"Yes—yes, to both your questions," replied Beaumont in surprise. "He admitted there was no evidence that I used the money in any other way than I had stated. But he admitted that to me when I was alone in the cell."

"Delancey Scott must have been a very good friend of yours." He looked at Beaumont with a little twinkle at the corners of his eyes. "You've told me a straight story, Beaumont. I know something about Scott—and just a little about your case, too. But why has he got it in for you?"

"I believe my wife divorced me and married Scott while I was in prison. We were boyhood rivals for her favor."

"And," said Big Slim cynically, "you win at last."

"Freda was deceived, sir. Of that I am certain."

"All the old-fashioned traits—gentleness, trust and loyalty," mused Big Slim. "A gentleman of square habits in dealing with both friend and foe."

"I beg your pardon?"

"Doing a little monologue for my own benefit," laughed Big Slim. "But I have been wondering if you and I haven't something in common—if we shouldn't make common cause against Delancey Scott."

"You know him then?"

"Oh, yes, somewhat. One night while I was examining his room in Honybrook with the aid of an electric flash his pink-pajamed person was imprinted forever on my consciousness. I left him tied to his own bedpost, rumbling with volcanic wrath."

"But—but—you suggest—why, you are a man of education, sir, and you would have me believe—"

"That I am a crook, Beaumont, keeping a pet shop for a monumental bluff while I map out my next attack on society." He winked slyly with an amused eye. "My education was ordinary, but I am one of that sort of men whose native mentality is constantly growing. In fine, Beaumont, I'm a self-made man who knocked off work a trifle too soon."

Douglas Beaumont stared at him with a troubled expression.

"You amaze me, sir!" he gasped. "After my own experience with the law I cannot condemn any man who defies it. Not that I am not going to live honestly, you understand. Still I must confess that I crave savagely to inflict suffering on my scatheless enemy, Delancey Scott. When I dislike a person I never relent; and nothing can weaken my affection for those I name my friends, sir!"

"Bravo! A man after my own heart. I can clearly foresee that we are going to get on famously together. Step back into my living room and I will a tale unfold."

The living room in the rear of the pet shop was cheerful, but beautifully clean, and smelt of recent scrubbing. Big Slim was known to do his own housework, and he did it thoroughly. The waning light of day, reddened by the sunset, came through the side windows, softening the outlines of the ugly furniture and chasing gray shadows into the far corners of the room.

Big Slim pushed Beaumont into a chair at a window and stood before him with brows knit in a heavy frown. "Now come clean, Old Honesty!" he rasped. "We've been fencing long enough. You were doing time for the job where you changed doors, an idea of mine that Jimmy Farnon put you wise to. You got off easy because Scott really believed you were the dupe of more experienced crooks. That honest game of yours never fooled me for a minute. Jimmy told me the facts—I know all."

"Everything?"

"Don't you believe me?" Big Slim blighted the skeptic with a glance. "You'll never catch me passing out a lie

like you just spilled. I worked with Jimmy before I got too well known, but I never lied to him. You walk in here with a ghost story an idiot wouldn't believe. What are you holding out for?"

"Well," stammered Beaumont, "I always like to play a thing safe. I'm wanted in England, you know, and Kitten, of Scotland Yard, has taken a vow to take me back there. But I know he can't!" he ended with an odd smile.

"That for Kitten!" said Big Slim with a contemptuous snap of his fingers. "I heard he was after you, but Jimmy is more afraid of Calvin Sharpless, who is Captain Campbell's pet. Why, Jimmy told me to my teeth that he wasn't afraid of Joel Kitten." Slim's smile matched Beaumont's effort for oddity. "I'm surprised that you should try to hoodwink me. I never worked with you, but I know a good many things about you."

"Then I don't have to say anything?" Beaumont gently inquired.

"Not on that score, for I know Delancey Scott sent you up for that Honeybrook affair before you skipped to England. It was the beginning of your criminal career. But your story convinced me that you were the right party. Jimmy Farnon said you were the damndest liar unhung, and couldn't tell the truth even accidentally. I happen to know Delancey Scott is still a bachelor, and that you never married a woman in your life. But Jimmy warned me about that. He said you lied for the fun of lying. Am I in on this Ferris affair?"

"Just how much did Jimmy tell you?"

"Bah!" Big Slim shrugged disdainfully. "I know that you, posing as the representative of frightened foreign capital, interested John Ferris in the purchase of a Pennsylvania steel plant for \$8,500,000. Ferris and his partners worked all night figuring the income tax to be paid on the property, which amounted to \$108,000. You insisted that Ferris pay the tax before the purchase price was paid and Jimmy Farnon rented an office near that of the Internal Revenue Collector, placed himself therein, and after the tax collector's office was closed for the day, changed the doors of the two offices. Then you led Ferris in to Farnon, and the thing was done. But Ferris recognized you on the street, and Scott, not knowing your English record, made it easy when you faked a squeal on Jimmy—when you knew that Jimmy was safe under cover. It's a great combination—Farnon's audacity and your honest appearance."

"I think so—indeed I do," returned Beaumont with ponderous gravity.

"But what's coming to me?" snorted Big Slim. "I planned every job Jimmy ever pulled off, but on account of my rep. I have to vegetate in a pet shop. I do the brain work, Jimmy pulls the tricks, and you come in with only an honest air. You've got the Ferris swag planted somewhere or Jimmy would have dumped you. Now, I'm in on—What's that?"

The door opened with a bang, and a brawny man in a police captain's uniform strode into the room.

"Hello, cap!" cried Beaumont, leaping to his feet. Then he drew an automatic and glided behind Big Slim.

"Hello, Sharpless!" greeted Captain Campbell with a grimace. "Calvin, you're out of luck. Warden Craig just phoned that Honest Beaumont is dead, but before he died he related with a chuckle that he had told you a fish story that would get you in wrong and let Farnon get away."

"The old scoundrel is wrong, captain! We have this fellow here, and Jimmy Farnon will be along any minute!" Calvin Sharpless' smile betokened deep satisfaction.

"Not a chance!" began Captain Campbell, when his glance fell on Big Slim. "Well, look who's here!" he cried. "Joel Kitten, what in the world are you doing so far from Scotland Yard?"

"Came after Honest Beaumont and fell in with Jimmy Farnon," was the sheepish reply of he whom Calvin Sharpless knew as Big Slim. "Beaumont was wanted on the other side, you know. Farnon took me to chum, thinking I was an English crook. Got drunk and spilled too much of what he knew, so I came here on my own and talked to Big Slim. He smelt a rat, so I tied him up, shoved him in a closet upstairs, and seeing that I resembled the bloody beggar somewhat, I decided to stay on and see this thing through."

"It's through, all right," said Captain Campbell, with the contraction of a mirthless laugh twisting his features. "Honest Beaumont's danger signal to Jimmy Farnon was three canaries, flying out of this place. He and Farnon were playing Big Slim for a sucker, and they intended to dump him. Beaumont told Warden Craig that he knew he could fool Sharpless with his yarn, and he died happy. We've got nothing here, boys, except—"

"A swindler who's been swindled," said Joel Kitten with a wry face. "That's the bloke I've got in the closet upstairs, and he was fooled quite as much as we've been."

I wonder if Farnon played drunk? It's a rather sad affair all around."

"I thought the three canaries would show a man who was glad his time was up," said Sharpless. "And the tale I told was just as Beaumont gave it to me. He even told me that it was a lie to conform to his character. On his deathbed he told me he couldn't tell the truth. How he must have laughed when I told him I was coming here to work out his instructions!"

"But Farnon don't get the swag," consoled Captain Campbell. "That's something he left behind!"

"Yes," sighed Sharpless, gazing thoughtfully at the ceiling. "That and empty cages!"

SPECIAL NOTICE

Please give your newsdealer a standing order for your semi-monthly copy of "MYSTERY MAGAZINE." The War Industries Board has asked all publishers to save waste. Newsdealers must, therefore, be informed if you intend to get a copy of this magazine every two weeks, so they will know how many copies to order from us.

NEW DEVICES FOR SECRETING BOOTY

IT is a well-known fact that the big retail stores, especially those engaged in the dry-goods, jewelry and fancy trades, are subjected to a heavy annual loss through the depredations of professional "shoplifters," as well as those well-connected individuals who are generally described as "kleptomaniacs" in the reports of the proceedings which are sometimes taken against them. The manager of a large department store smiled at the suggestions that the prevalence of this class of petty crime was somewhat exaggerated.

"Do you know," he said, "that our firm and most large establishments are put to the expense of maintaining a staff of detectives, both male and female, for the purpose of keeping a watchful eye upon these pests?"

"For some years past I have been forming a museum of the implements used by shoplifters, and although I have had vast experience of their methods, I am learning new devices every day."

"I well remember a somewhat severe old lady who used to make trifling purchases here some years ago. She looked the acme of austere respectability with her black dress and the eye-glasses through which she would critically examine our goods. She used sometimes to buy small silver-mounted handbags and trifles like thimbles which she wanted to make presents of to her nieces."

"One day an awkward accident happened. While an assistant was showing her a case of rings, she unfortunately pushed against his arm, upset the case, and caused the rings to fall to the ground. The old lady was profuse in her apologies, which, of course, we accepted, although when we picked up the rings and counted them one was missing, and the most rigorous search failed to discover its whereabouts."

"Two weeks afterward a friend of mine, in another well-known firm, told me of a similar accident caused by the awkwardness of an old lady, whose description answered in every particular to our customer. An article of jewelry was also on this occasion missing."

"Four or five months afterward a similar accident occurred through the same old lady in my shop. I ordered her to be detained, and when she was searched it was discovered that she was wearing a boot having a piece of hard wax concealed under the arch of the instep, not quite touching the ground, but low enough to enable a ring or charm to adhere to it, and so allow the thief to leave the place unsuspected."

"Muffs are useful articles to the shoplifters. Hooks are concealed in the fur, and a pocket is also ingeniously constructed. Armed with a muff of this description the wearer operates, without arousing the assistant's suspicion, among the articles displayed on a shop counter, and continues to annex a surprising quantity of property."

A rather matronly looking woman who once honored us with her patronage had an enormous pocket, almost the size of a small sack, constructed inside her skirt, which she reached through an opening concealed by a pleat."

"Then there was a smart up-to-date young lady, who wore a sailor hat and blouse, with starched cuffs and collar. Our assistant once heard a suspicious click, and it was discovered that her stiff cuffs were made with a kind of trap, which opened when pressed, and she was able to push small watches up her sleeve with little fear of detection."

"The same young lady, when searched at the station, was discovered to be wearing garters provided with strong hooks, from which depended numerous little articles. She communicated with them through an ingeniously concealed opening in the seam of her smart serge dress."

"More annoying even than the thieves are the kleptomaniacs. One lady I knew made a specialty of stealing boxes of family soap. Others appropriate matches by the dozen boxes, and drinking glasses exercise extraordinary fascination over certain minds. These people are impossible to guard against, and they cause unlimited annoyance to their relatives as well as shopkeepers."

A TERRIBLE WOMAN

By TOM FOX—DETECTIVE

"WANTED.—In a widower's family, a position as housekeeper. Address: Widow, 126 Star office."

There was nothing peculiar strange in the above advertisement.

It was simply that of some widow, poor, of course, wanting a home and some money to clothe herself with; and possibly her desire of finding such a home was that she had an idea connected with some future matrimonial venture, in case she and the widower suited each other.

Such advertisements in almost the exact words are frequently seen.

This particular advertisement fell under the notice of Hiram Goodwin as he sat at breakfast one morning.

He was a widower, and had but one child, a daughter, who ostensibly had charge of the house.

But Laura Goodwin was a bright and gay little thing, not yet out of her teens, and thinking more of society than housekeeping.

The muffins on this particular morning had been heavy as lead, and Mr. Goodwin had spoken of the fact.

"But how can I help their being heavy, papa?" said Laura. "I tell the servant what to get for the meals, and if she doesn't do it right how can I help it?" in a pitiful tone.

"But you should see that it is done right," he had replied.

"I can't."

"Why?"

"Because, papa, I don't know how to do these things myself. Now if I knew how to make muffins, and she made them heavy, I'd show her my way."

"But why don't you learn?"

"Who will teach me?"

Here the discussion closed, and Mr. Goodwin began to read as he drank his muddy coffee.

Suddenly he looked up.

"Laura!"

"Yes, sir," giving attention; and then he read the advertisement.

"I'm going to answer it," he said, as he finished.

"Oh, papa, can't you see through that advertisement? It is written by some designing woman who wants to get married."

"Pshaw! I'm going to answer it. As for my heart, I'll take care of that if you will take care of yours. Besides, it will relieve you from the necessity of learning how to cook," in a slightly sarcastic tone.

And Mr. Goodwin answered the advertisement, and appointed an hour at which "Widow" was to call.

Punctually to the very minute the door-bell rang.

"On time," said Mr. Goodwin, glancing at his watch. "That's a good trait."

"Mr. Goodwin, I presume?" said a voice, as its owner entered the parlor.

She was a woman of medium height, nearly forty years of age, face smooth and unwrinkled, and hair brushed smoothly back off her forehead and coiled gracefully at the back of her head.

She was dressed quite plainly, yet very neatly, and altogether produced a very favorable impression on Mr. Goodwin.

In less than ten minutes they arrived at a perfect understanding.

Mrs. Smiley had given him excellent references; he was to inquire into them that afternoon, and she was to come the next morning prepared to remain.

"I'm sure you'll never regret having engaged me," said Mrs. Smiley, as she bowed herself out.

"I do not anticipate doing so," was the rather gallant reply, for making which Mr. Goodwin took himself to task when he remembered that this woman was to be his housekeeper.

"But she is a deuced nice woman," he told himself. "I think I have found a treasure. There's only one thing I don't altogether like about her, and that is the expression of her eyes."

This remark would have been made by most observant people had they seen Mrs. Smiley. Her eyes were a dark gray, and generally hard-looking as adamant.

The next morning Mrs. Smiley came.

"You have attended to my references, I suppose?" she said.

"Yes—that is—yes, your references are all right," was the reply.

A smile wreathed Mrs. Smiley's thin lips as she went up the stairs to the room assigned to her use.

"The old fool has never made an inquiry about me. Well, so much the better," she muttered.

A short while later she came downstairs, dressed plainly, and wearing a pretty gingham apron.

"This is my daughter, Mrs. Smiley," said Mr. Goodwin, introducing the new housekeeper to Laura. "There will be no need of your coming into conflict. Laura understands that you have charge of the house, still, any suggestions she may have to make will, I trust, meet with your approval."

"They surely will," was the reply. "And now, Miss Laura, I suppose you will show me over the house and introduce me to the servants?"

"With pleasure," and Laura led the way from the parlor.

Mrs. Smiley had been an inmate of Mr. Goodwin's house for over a month, and that gentleman was firm in the conviction that he had found a treasure of a housekeeper.

The meals were always on time, everything about the house went on smoothly; muffins were always light, the coffee never muddy.

Unconsciously to himself, the widow was shrewdly taking advantage of his disposition toward herself, and was gradually worming herself into his confidence.

Mr. Goodwin's wealth was computed at a million of dollars, and he lived in a style to accord with it.

Many a time had Mrs. Smiley's eyes glittered as she scanned the solid silverware and gold-lined cups and spoons. But that she saw only a portion of the plate, she knew.

In the library was a large safe, the combination of which was alone known to Mr. Goodwin. Into this the plate was put at night and locked up. In the morning, after Mr. Goodwin opened the safe, Laura would pass out such silver as she wished used that day.

"I must and will know how to open that safe," muttered Mrs. Smiley one day. "Time is being wasted—the gang will be getting impatient."

That night Mrs. Smiley presented herself at the library door over an hour after the safe had been locked.

"I'm sorry to trouble you," she said, "but one of the servants was so careless as to have kept this piece of silver, and I did not notice its absence."

"That is all right," was Mr. Goodwin's reply, and he began to unlock the safe, while Mrs. Smiley, with hawk-like eyes, watched him turn the knob of the combination lock.

Suddenly Mr. Goodwin paused.

"By the way, Mrs. Smiley, I believe I'll intrust you with the combination. Silver has been left out accidentally before this. It might happen again when I am not at home."

"But, sir, really—do you think it proper that I should know the combination?" with difficulty concealing the joy she actually felt.

"I shouldn't trust you with it if I didn't think it proper," and then he explained the combination.

Having fastened the numbers in her memory, Mrs. Smiley withdrew.

Her face was lighted with an evil, triumphant expression.

Her hands were clenched.

Her teeth were grimly set.

"Won't!" she exclaimed. "I could win the old fool over to marry me if I wanted him. 'Wanted, a position in a widower's family.' They all bite at that."

When the house was wrapped in the silence of the night, a woman's figure stole through the halls and entered the library.

It was Mrs. Smiley.

She knelt before the safe and tried the combination.

She had not forgotten it, and in two minutes she swung open the heavy doors.

When they squeaked she caught her breath and listened intently, to learn if it had been heard, or had caused any alarm. No one seemed to have been disturbed.

By the aid of the low-burning gas-jet, she went over the pile of massive old silverware, piece by piece, noting each down on a slip of paper, together with its probable weight.

In the upper part of the safe were two compartments locked by keys.

She had once seen Laura, dressed for an evening reception, wearing a magnificent tiara of diamonds in her hair.

Were not these diamonds contained in one of the locked compartments?

"They must be," she muttered, "and unless I'm mistaken there are more in there than I've ever seen."

From her pocket she took a bit of wax, and with it obtained an impression of the key-hole to each of these compartments.

Then she closed the safe and went softly back to her own room.

"It will be a glorious haul," she told herself as she computed the value of the silverware.

The following afternoon a deeply veiled woman might have been seen threading her way through one of the lowest and worst quarters of the city.

Turning suddenly aside, she speedily disappeared into a liquor saloon.

"Is Bill here?" she asked the bartender.

"Downstairs," was the brief reply.

Entering a back room, she passed through a door leading into a dark and noisome cellar, the rendezvous and hiding-place of a gang of the most reckless and desperate thieves who ever cursed New York by their presence.

"Halloo, old gal. I thought you'd forgotten all about us," was the salutation of a rough-looking individual who arose from a table at which he had been playing cards and came forward to meet her.

"No, I've not forgotten you."

"And how's the widower?" with a harsh laugh.

Mrs. Smiley joined in the laugh.

"Did you 'mash' him?" inquired Bill.

"Yes."

"And how are things?"

"Working splendidly."

"Is the big job going to pay?"

"Yes, big"; and then she told him of the silverware and the diamonds.

"You've got an impression of the key-holes in the safe?"

"Yes, here they are," was the reply. "When can I have the keys?"

"In three days."

And three days later Mrs. Smiley obtained the keys. That night she again stole into the library and opened the safe, then unlocked the compartments and exposed their treasures to her gloating eyes.

Then she closed the doors and prepared to return to her own room.

As she reached the door she was startled by coming into contact with Laura Goodwin.

The young lady glanced sharply at her, and, Mrs. Smiley thought, suspiciously.

"What are you doing down here?" asked Laura.

"I thought I heard somebody stirring, and was alarmed for the safety of the house," she answered. "I was mistaken, though, and am returning to my room."

From that hour Laura Goodwin distrusted Mrs. Smiley. She had never liked the woman, and now she began to suspect her.

Mr. Goodwin laughed at her fears, but Laura was not to be laughed out of her opinion. She began to covertly watch the housekeeper, and the more she watched the more confirmed became her suspicions.

"I'm afraid of her," said Laura one day, with a shiver; "I should not be surprised if she were not what she pretends to be."

Meanwhile Mrs. Smiley was daily ingratiating herself with Mr. Goodwin.

When Laura went out of an evening with one of her gentlemen friends, he would call Mrs. Smiley to sit by him in the library for an hour or two.

"The old fool!" she would think of him.

"I wonder if I wouldn't be happy if I married her?" he would think. "Suppose she is my housekeeper, she is very much of a lady."

It was an evening several weeks subsequent to the second visit of Mrs. Smiley to the safe.

"Bless me, Mrs. Smiley, how your eyes sparkle to-night!" exclaimed Mr. Goodwin earnestly. "What has happened?"

"Nothing," she replied, quietly; and then to herself:

"Do I, then, show it? I must be more careful"; and she forced a more sober expression into her face.

About ten o'clock she went into the kitchen, carrying concealed in her hand a tiny vial. One of the girls had made a pitcher of lemonade, and into this she managed to slip a few drops from the vial without being detected. There was a cup of coffee to be carried up to Mr. Goodwin.

Into this just one tiny drop was put.

Then upstairs she went, and into Laura's room.

On her dressing-table was a glass of wine.

Into this Mrs. Smiley dumped all the liquid remaining in the little vial.

"For the others only sound slumber; for you the sleep of death!" she hissed between her clenched teeth. "You think I have been blind—have not noticed that you are watching me—spying on me—have attempted to poison your father's mind against me. I heard you one day call me 'a terrible woman'; and a terrible woman I am where I hate."

She softly left the room and went to her own, her eyes gleaming, her breath suppressed.

Her plans were all complete, and that night the blow would be struck.

"I must go down again," she said to herself; and smoothing her face, she descended to the library.

On the stairs she met Laura.

"The hussy!" she thought. "An hour hence your eyes will not look at me like that. It is best to silence you, for you might direct suspicion towards me."

She attended to closing up the lower floor of the house.

The servants were yawning and frightfully stupid-looking.

"You can all go to bed," she said; and they went upstairs, followed by Mrs. Smiley.

She was just turning into the library when there came a ring at the door-bell.

One of the servants went to the door, and Mrs. Smiley paled as she heard some man say:

"I must see Mr. Goodwin, and at once. You need not announce me. I see a light in yonder room; I shall probably find him there."

"Who are you, who intrudes in this manner?" demanded Mr. Goodwin, in a half-angered tone.

The newcomer's face lighted as his eyes fell on Mrs. Smiley's pallid features.

"I will tell you, sir, I am a detective!" with a stern glance at Mrs. Smiley, who now started back with a low cry of despair.

"A detective! And what is your business here?"

"To save your lives, to save you from the most terrible woman who ever drew the breath of life, the wife of Chain-gang Bill. She entered your house to murder and rob you: I've been trailing her for some time and only located her here to-night."

"It cannot be!" gasped Mr. Goodwin. "Surely you are mistaken. Come closer, Mrs. Smiley," and he seized her by the wrist, and dragged her forward. "Come closer, that he may see you better, that he may know he is mistaken."

Calmly, steadily, the detective reiterated his charge. "And to-night may be the time set for her devilish work. Your daughter suspected her, and this woman may poison her. Perhaps already your daughter has drank a poisoned draught."

"Heaven, pity me!" moaned Mr. Goodwin, and springing into the hall he called aloud: "Laura—Laura!"

But no answering call came back.

Upstairs he dashed.

Laura lay across her bed, pale and death-like. He rushed into the quarters of the servants, but they were soundly sleeping under the influence of the drug, and he himself dashed from the house, bare-headed, in quest of a doctor.

Laura's life was barely saved.

About one o'clock Bill and his gang put in an appearance and all were captured. It transpired that a man who was to have taken part in the affair had been stricken down to death's door by an accident, and before breathing his last had revealed the plot worked up by this terrible woman.

Mr. Goodwin never sees the heading "Wanted" that he does not shudder. But he has one satisfactory reflection, that all the gang are lodged safely in prison for long terms.

Our next number will contain a remarkable story entitled "That Engagement-Ring Trick," by Charles S. Jordan.

NEWLY DISCOVERED USES FOR GLUE

WITH our government demanding all possible conservation in American households, several newly discovered uses for glue present to the thoughtful woman opportunities to prolong the life of household articles.

As every family has, or should have, on hand a bottle or tube of good glue, the following practical suggestions can be acted upon without delay or expense.

To Put New Life In an Old Broom—A teaspoonful of glue mixed in a basin of hot water poured over a broom and then allowed to thoroughly dry will greatly stiffen it and prolong its usefulness and life.

When Shoes Become Baked or Scarred—Very often a small piece of the leather is lifted or loosened. Don't cut it off and try to cover the place with blacking. Flatten the piece in place with a little glue and allow to dry. Then apply blacking and the surface will be as good as new.

For Tears or Rents In Silk—Another piece of silk or

fabric of the same color placed under the tear with a thin coating of glue will bring the edges more firmly together than can be done with a needle. Allow to dry thoroughly and rent will be almost invisible.

A Splendid Way to Keep Rubbers from Slipping—Rubber overshoes often become so loose that they slip off at the heels, especially in the winter and spring when the ground is muddy or slushy. This annoying trouble can be entirely eliminated by gluing a felt band around the inside top of the rubber.

To Protect Furs and Woolens from Moths—It is commonly known that moths very much dislike the odor of ink in old newspapers. Several thicknesses of old newspapers firmly glued together may be made into the form of a bag and the garment placed inside. After the ends and all joints are firmly sealed with glue the bag is absolutely moth and dust proof, and your protection from moths has cost practically nothing.

A LESSON IN POKER

By LOUIS F. MASSEN

"BRUXELLIS" was a café well known to men about town as the rendezvous of bankers, brokers, lawyers, and in fact men of all walks of life who could afford the time and money to spend a quiet hour or two discussing his rare viands or wines. On a warm evening, not long ago, there was seated at one of the numerous tables a party of five men; the remains of a substantial meal, and three or four empty champagne bottles, as well as drained glasses, told the story. One of the party, who looked like a college student, suggested a game of "draw," three of the others unanimously assented, but the fifth when appealed to quietly shook his head and answered: "Pardon me, boys, but I never play."

"Why?" the rest asked.

"Because of an incident which happened to me some time ago."

"Tell us of it," they all asked.

"It's a long story," he said.

"We'll listen," said one, and as he had the reputation of being a good story-teller, cigars were lighted, and they settled down to listen to his narrative.

"Five years ago this August I was confidential clerk for the firm of Wyeth & Bros., dry-goods merchants of this city. I was also engaged to the sweetest little blue-eyed girl in the world, and expected soon to make her my wife. One Saturday afternoon I was summoned to the private office of the senior member of our firm.

"Mr. Northwick," said he, "there is a collection of \$13,260 due us in Milwaukee, and I would like you to make it. As you intend to have ten days' vacation next week, you can make it fifteen days, and start to-night."

"Very well, sir," said I, overjoyed, for I knew I could do his errand in three days, so that would give me two days longer with my fiancée. I determined to leave for Milwaukee that very night. I arrived safe at my destination and made the collection without incident, and started for home. I reached Cleveland one cool night in the latter part of August, with the money in a leather wallet in my breast pocket, and as I did not like to carry a large amount around with me unnecessarily, I left it with the clerk of the hotel. I shall always believe he was in collusion with a gang of professional gamblers who lived in the house to catch the unwary, because immediately after supper I was introduced to several very sleek-looking gentlemen. After a while a game of poker was suggested, and as I had several hundred dollars of my own money, and the limit was low, and I knew I could hold my own, I saw no objection to taking a hand. Such is the vanity of mankind in all games of chance. The party was nearly made up, when I was accosted by a young man with whom I had made friends on the trip from Milwaukee by the name of Payne, and whose frank, honest face inspired me with confidence. I was particularly anxious that he should join the game, in order that I might have some one at the table who was not an entire stranger. Of course the other pretended to be simply speaking acquaintances, but I was not so ignorant as to accept that as truth, and I was consequently on the *qui-vive* for any crooked work, and resolved to stop at the first sign of it. Harold Payne

agreed to take a hand provided he would be allowed to stop when he chose.

"The game progressed quietly for half an hour, nobody caring to increase the limit agreed on. I was about ninety dollars ahead. Payne was a small loser. Not much money had changed hands. As vigilant as I was, I had not noticed the slightest evidence of fraud on the part of the others, and I played with a feeling of greater confidence, and found myself gradually taking a greater interest in the game. Very little talking was done, I, probably, doing the most. About this time we had a 'jack pot.' The 'dealer' was the man on my left; one of the strangers. The first player passed, the second player said he couldn't open it, the third player (Payne) rapped on the table, to indicate he had not 'jacks or better,' the fourth player (the man on my right), tossed in a blue chip, saying: 'I burst it for the limit.' I looked at my hand and saw two pair, kings and jacks, and quietly said:

"I raise it another blue." The 'dealer' 'passed,' as did the next. The second player stayed for the ten dollars, so did Payne, the fourth player, who opened the pot, saw my raise and raised again. I 'chipped in,' but was surprised to see the second player 'develop strength' in his hand, for he not only 'raised,' but did it with a firmness and alacrity which showed that he meant to stay. Payne wouldn't be 'frozen out.' When it came to No. 4, he again 'raised.' It then dawned on me that Payne and I were being 'whip-sawed,' so I determined to quietly drop out. Sure enough No. 2 'boosted' it again. Payne laid down. No. 4 merely stayed, and I concluded to draw cards.

"No. 2 took two cards, the reasoning of this was that he was drawing to a small pair and a 'kicker,' or that he had strengthened his hand by declining to 'open' on 'threes,' or that he was trying to fill a 'three bob flush.' I set him down for a pair of spot cards with an ace or a king. If a king I had little fear of his getting the case card, for I already held two kings myself. Of course, the chief danger from him was that he probably had 'threes' to go in. No. 4's draw was puzzling. He took one card and placed his discard conspicuously before him. He laid a chip on it. This was evidently intended to give the idea that he had 'broken' a pair upon which he had opened, and was now drawing to a flush or straight. Knowing that I had possibly 'threes' to beat at No. 2, and a 'straight' or 'flush' at No. 4, I made a 'freak draw.' I discarded my pair of kings and the eight of clubs and drew three cards. The reason why I preferred to 'stay' to the jacks, rather than to the kings was, that I had a sneaking suspicion that No. 2 was 'holding up' a king. I picked up my three cards and to my surprise discovered that two were jacks and the third one was a king. The discovery rather disconcerted me, for it was evident that I would have had a full hand in any case, that is with Payne driven out and only two men before me drawing cards. So strong was that thought, that I would have played a king or jack full with great caution, but with fours it was different. There was nothing whatever to indicate a suspicion of fraud around the table. So I tried to look unconcerned and waited for the opening bet. Then I

'raised' to the limit. I heard it 'raised' again. I saw the original opener lift it once more with a remark about 'overplaying a high flush.' I am not sure whether I first suggested abolishing the limit or whether the player on the left of me did. I began to feel the indescribable passion of the gaming table. The prospect of winning the money of my companions was so promising and I became a different man, dominated solely by a selfishness I had never known before. However, somebody suggested abolishing the limit. I was glad that the suggestion was acceded to by the two other players. I had discarded two kings, so there could not be four kings against me, and I thought that there was hardly four aces or four queens out. When the player on my left 'raised' my last raise \$100 I was mentally delighted. I was overjoyed when the original 'opener' made it \$100 more. I had about \$600 of my own money in my pocket, so I took out my wallet, counted out \$450, saw the \$200 'raise,' and pushed the remaining \$250 in the center of the table, remarking as I did so:

"I raise it \$250."

"The next moment I asked Payne to ring the bell summoning the bell-boy. When the boy appeared I told him to ask the clerk in the office to come to the room at once. I wanted more money and it seemed little risk to borrow the firm's cash in my possession. I know it was embezzlement, but an angel from heaven could not have convinced me then. In my excitement I forgot that I had marked the amount of money upon the outside of the envelope as required by law, in order that the liability of the hotel proprietor might be fixed, and that a knowledge of the exact amount of my finances might enable my opponents, if they had money enough, to 'freeze' me out by 'raising' till I could no longer put up. The clerk responded with suspicious alacrity, and in a few moments the precious envelope was in my hands, after which he quickly disappeared. My opponents had shown unusual deliberation during the incident with the clerk, and it was not until after his departure that the man on my left 'saw' my \$250 'raise' and the \$100 of the other fellow, making \$350 in all, after which he added five new crisp \$100 bills to the amount. I felt a cold perspiration break out all over me, and realized for the first time that I was in a desperate predicament. 'Mine are just as good as they were,' remarked No. 4 as he counted out \$1,250 in satisfaction to the two 'raises,' and his own \$500 raise.

"I looked at my hand cautiously; none of the jacks had escaped, and as I reviewed the situation the possibility of a straight flush in the hand of the man to my right froze the marrow in my bones. What was I to do?"

"I could have retired with a comparatively small loss to myself then, but you do not comprehend the passion that controlled me; I was like the Asiatic tiger after his first taste of human blood, thirsting for more.

"It cost me \$1,000 to call, but I did so. To my chagrin the man on my left saw the \$100 raise of his opponent and added another thousand to it. No. 4 without an instant's hesitation raised back the pot \$1,000. I then knew I had 'over bet' my hand, but I was 'in' too far to 'drop out,' as I had already embezzled \$1,00 of the firm's money

and ruin stared me in the face. I 'saw' the \$2,000 as promptly as possible, now fortunately counting the money in my lap. That made \$3,000 of the money entrusted to my care.

"Happening to glance at the envelope, I made the discovery that, in my anxiety to put the money in the safe, I had omitted to put the correct amount thereon, and instead of marking it \$13,260, I had omitted the first figure and marked it \$3,260. I was called to my senses by the man on my right, who seemed nearly out of money, who 'saw' my \$1,000 'raise,' and added exactly \$250 thereto. This was an eye-opener to me. It showed that they were in possession of the supposed amount of my stake. I knew just what to expect next, and it came like a volley from a cannon. With a gleam of triumph in his eye, No. 4 'saw' the \$260 'raise,' and calmly added: 'I lift it \$1,000.' Here is where the catastrophe should have occurred. The player on my left was evidently 'broken,' and showed his intention to 'lay down' his cards. My friend Payne was aghast—fully realizing that I had been 'whip-sawed' by the two men who had been acting in cohort against me. He was going through his clothes rapidly, trying to find me enough money to call for the third time, but I could see by his face that it was hopeless. I saw a gleam of sarcastic mirth on the face of the dealer. It was by an effort that I swallowed the lump in my throat, looked at my cards again to make sure they were still there, and with a sigh that would have broken the heart of my sweetheart, I counted out \$1,260, and then raised the pot \$3,000 in 'long green.' Consternation appeared on the faces of my companions. The two players at last cast off the mask. No. 2 asked his colleague to lend him enough to 'call' me. He appealed to Payne, showing him his hand, which held four aces. He was finally compelled to throw down his hand. No. 4 was in dismay. He wanted me to reduce my bet to \$1,000, which was all he had, but I refused. Asking Payne to take out my watch, I asked my only remaining antagonist what he proposed to do. He wanted to leave the room for fifteen minutes to secure more money.

"Never!" said I.

"At a motion from me Payne rose and locked the door, and put the key in his pocket.

"I was well armed, as also was Payne. I was determined to make the fight of my life for the possession of that money. I believed that I had detected a scheme to rob me, and I was not disposed to concede a single point. At the end of five minutes the gambler tossed his hand into the center of the table and got on his feet. As he did so we all arose. He bowed to me and said, with a calmness that marked him as the professional gambler: 'It's a dead freeze out, but your nerve and your money win!'

"He laid down a Straight Flush!

"That, gentleman," said the one known as Northwick, "is why I never play poker."

Read "Skeleton Sam's Oversight," by Louis Schneider, to appear in No. 29, out January 15. It is intensely interesting.

OSTRICH MEAT PLENTIFUL IN ARIZONA

THE owner of a large ranch in southern Arizona, having determined to abandon ostrich raising in favor of cultivating long-staple cotton, recently decided to kill 800 of the large birds and sell the meat—approximately 25,000 pounds—to the people of the surrounding region. It is estimated that a few years ago there were 8,000 ostriches

on ranches in this district. More recently, however, large numbers of them have been turned out to roam the foothills uncared for, or have been killed. But for the fact that coyotes and other wild animals are fond of the big eggs, it is thought that there would soon be considerable numbers of wild ostriches in the region.

HIS FIRST ATTEMPT

By JOHN PERLEY ROBINSON

"WHY are you waiting so anxiously for the postman, Cy?" queried Mrs. Doolittle, as she came out on the piazza where her husband was industriously whittling a stick and peering down the road. "Why not go down to the village and try to collect that nine dollars Jim White owes you for a shoat? I need that money to pay at the grocery store."

"I done collected that money last week, Betty," admitted Cy sheepishly, "and I invested it. Going to be my own boss hereafter. What's the use of working for other folks, and handing 'em haff of every day's pay I earn, when I can be a professional man and keep all my own fees? I reasoned it all out last week, and there hain't no money in working for other folks; so I decided to learn a regular profession. I got them nine dollars, and sent 'em on to New York, and that's why I'm waiting for Bill Moolin to come along with the mail right now."

"Im," said his wife dubiously, "you ain't going to study law, be you, Cy?"

"Nope," averred he, taking heart because his wife did not question his wisdom in frittering away the money. "I'm going to learn to be a regular detective."

"And git shot up? Surely, you're joshing me."

"Not a bit, Betty. The Bogus Detective Company what sent me an advertisement wants men all over the country—men with hawk-like minds like what I've got, that can figger out strange happenings. I'm one of the best figgers-out in these parts, if it's me that does say it; and there's lots of work for us Hawkshaws to do. Hunting up deserters and finding automobiles stolen by low-down folks that would jest as soon steal hosses. They used to hang men for that out West. There comes Bill with the mail now."

The postman came up the walk and handed Cyrus a large package, and then killed time industriously for fifteen minutes in the hope that Cy would open it in his presence. But Mr. Doolittle was already growing astute, and realized the value of absolute privacy. Hadn't he read the *Prospectus* all through several times? Moolin discussed the war, the crops and everything else, then finally left when he saw that Cy did not intend to open the parcel post package just then. It was not until Bill was well out of sight that Mr. Doolittle dared open it. Then there tumbled out an assortment of stage make-up that made his good wife gasp in genuine astonishment.

"What's all them hairy things, Cy?"

"Whiskers," said Cy proudly, "false whiskers."

"Sho! and you never wore whiskers of no kind in your life."

"All the better for me," reasoned Cy shrewdly. "Folks is so used to seein' me wearing a clean shave, they never will know me in whiskers," and he chuckled. "I've got seven pair of whiskers in this outfit, some lip paint, green goggles, blue ones, and some false eye-brows. Let's go in the house and see if the whiskers fit."

"I won't do it. I won't wear whiskers for you nor no one else," declared Betty.

"I just mean to say that I will try them on, and you can see if you know me in 'em," explained Cyrus.

They adjourned to the sitting-room, and before the family looking-glass he tried on the various hirsuit disguises, much to Betty's astonishment. Though disappointed at not getting the grocery money, she exhibited the keenest interest in Cy's explanations of the truly fabulous rewards he was going to earn deetecting. For an hour there was much "Oh, my! don't you look funny in that!" and remarks of like caliber.

Finally he put a coat of burned cork on his face and a woolly wig on his head, and the transformation was complete. Betty was lost in wonder.

"It's a great risk, though, Cy," she ruminated.

"No risk at all," contradicted he. "I don't take no risk; I just rely on strategy to git all the information I kin, and if there's any wrestling to do, I'll set the proper ossifers on the job. I expect the City Marshal will be some surprised when he sees me wearing that silver star."

"Watchter going to deetect first?" she asked breathlessly.

"Stolen automobiles," answered Cy promptly. "Many's the auto that's stole in the city and run to some little town like this. But the Finding Agency in New York puts me wise every week, by sending me a list of missing cars. All I have to do is locate them, have the fellers arrested, and send on for my ten dollars reward. It's a cinch. S'pose some city feller steals an automobile and tries to run it to Baltimore? He has to pass right through this town, and ten to one he is like as not to put up at Welcome Higgins' garage while he gits dinner. Then I can slip in and find out if it's one that's on the list of missing automobiles. It's just like finding money in the road."

The next week was both a busy and anxious one. Cyrus refused three days' work because he just couldn't refrain from awaiting the postman's call. He expected reports of missing cars. Afternoons he would rig up in one of his strange disguises, stroll around the neighborhood, and now and then engage in a limited conversation with folks who knew him. But none suspected his identity, and by Saturday night neighbors had reported no less than seven strange men climbing Cy's back fence after dark. Only faithful Betty knew all seven were no one but Cyrus himself.

But one day in August he came running in breathlessly. He had a report card in his hand that was fully three weeks old.

"I just seen an automobile go down the road that is the dead image of this description, Betty," he shouted. "Dollars to doughnuts they're at Welcome's garage right now. Gimme some whiskers. I'm going right down and get busy."

"But, Cy," expostulated his wife. "If they're strangers, they wouldn't know you anyhow; so what's the use of whiskers?"

"What's the use trying to explain things to wimmen?" groaned Cy. "I tell you I want some whiskers; bring me the black ones."

The obedient wife brought on the needed disguise, then Cy hustled into some strange clothes, and away he went.

Betty waited all the afternoon. Suppertime came, and went, and she began to be fearful for Cy's safety. It was about twilight before he climbed the fence in the rear of the house and stealthily entered his own premises. Betty felt sure something unusual had occurred; but she gave him his supper, and then hung on for an explanation, that somehow or other Cy felt had to come.

So he began:

"I got down to the garage before they got back from having dinner at the hotel. I had the hood of their machine up, as per directions No. 43, in the Instruction Book, which the Bogus Detective Agency furnishes. I was hunting for the number on the motor. Lots of automobiles looks just alike, Betty, except for the factory number which is casted onto the engine, right on the side which it can't be filled up nor chiseled off. I had it down in my notebook, when in comes the fellows and cotched me with the cover up off the machine. They got suspicious right off, and says I, they're guilty, sure pop. They got real ugly about me, but what could I do? I wasn't sure it was the number of a stolen car yet. But they seemed in such a mighty hurry to git on the road that I was dead sure they was pinching that car. They got in, and the feller driving stepped on the self-starter, and out the garage they bolted. I knew then I had some suspicious characters to contend with. There was nothing to do but hook on behind and foller up the clue.

"So I hooked on behind, one foot on the tire rack, and holding on the top of the rack to keep steady. Down through the village they tore, then took the woods road to Jiggersville, going so fast I had to hold on tight or git smashed if I let go.

We struck the woods, then one of the fellers looks out of the little winder in the back, and sees me peekin' through, and he gits the other chap to stop the machine. I was right glad to git free, too, Betty, for riding that way at the speed they was going was mighty dangerous.

But I knew there was danger in the detective business long ago, only I didn't let on to you. Well, they had me foul. One had a pistol. And there I was right in the woods, ten miles from home. They wanted to know what I was doing. Think of it, Betty, they tried to charge me with trying to steal the spare tire off the back end."

"The idea, Cy," protested Betty. "That shows there was something wrong about them; anybody could see you're honest enough."

"Well, they didn't believe it," admitted Cy ruefully, "and they started in to man-handle me. We had some scrimmage, during which my whiskers got turned around sideways, and then both the fellers stopped punchin' me and began to laff as if to kill. One of 'em held me while the other stole my whiskers, right in broad daylight. It's highway robbery, and if I can git track of who they be, I've got a case of law on 'em fer damages. It was the best pair of whiskers I had, too. Git the linament bottle. With the wrastling I done, and the ten-mile walk home, I sorter feel lame. It's a durn shame, losing them whiskers!"

"Never mind, Cy," comforted Betty, "you've got the mouse-colored whiskers still left to wear for best. I never did like them black whiskers you wore this noon. They made you look too much like a Rooshin mougic. They set of mouse-colored whiskers is a good deal more becoming."

"Yep," said Cy mournfully; "but they shook my false eye-brows off, and them was the only extra eye-brows I had. I calkerlate I'll give up detectin', Betty. It's too risky. Besides, a feller couldn't capture an automobile thief unless ther skunk was chained to a railroad track. I'm goin' back ter farmin'."

A startling detective story, entitled "Fashionable Thieves," is to be one of our best offerings in the next number of this magazine. Be sure to read it.

JAP QUICK AT FIGURES

AT a meeting of the Tacoma chapter of the American Institute of Bank Clerks recently a Japanese clerk, using a "saroban," "put it all over" a Tacoma bank clerk using a modern adding machine in casting up a long column of figures. The Japanese, with his "saroban," did the arithmetical "stunt" in 30 seconds, while the bank clerk, with his modern adding machine, took 54 seconds to obtain a total, and afterward it was found the clerk or the modern adding machine had made an error, while the Japanese with his little abacus or "saroban" obtained the correct result the first time. In another test the Japanese might make an error as did the bank clerk. However, it is significant that the Japanese did not err and that he obtained a correct result far more quickly, though he used an ancient arithmetical device.

The Japanese who won the contest in adding was once a clerk in a bank at Osaka, Japan. He disclaims being an expert in adding, and says many Japanese are much faster on the "saroban" than he. The little, old-fashioned adding machine used by the Japanese is what we call an abacus. Years ago in our public schoolrooms the abacus used to hang on the wall, and it was sometimes used in the study of arithmetic. It is not used much nowadays, though it would appear from the speed and accuracy of the Japanese that it might be employed with good results.

The abacus in use in China is known as the swan pan. The Chinese are also rapid calculators. The abacus is a

very simple device when compared with the modern adding machine. It is probable that it requires more practice and more arithmetical ability to get correct results from an abacus than are required with the modern adding machine.

The abacus is very ancient. It was used by the Egyptians and Greeks in a form similar to that now used in Japan, China, Arabia and Russia. The word is traced through the Greek to a word meaning "dust." It is said that dust was spread upon a board and that numerals were inscribed in the dust.

In early times the Greeks used such a board, and it is supposed that geometry as well as arithmetic was taught with the use of that kind of an abacus. Later an abacus was developed in which beads slid on wire or in grooves, the beads having a value depending upon column. This was probably like the abacus now used in Japan and China. The word "calculate" is traced to a Greek word meaning pebble. It is supposed that pebbles were used in the early abacus.

The victory of the Tacoma Japanese with his "saroban" over one of our bank clerks with a modern adding machine is not an exceptional instance. A few months ago, when the Japanese commercial commissioners visited the United States, a contest was held in which a Japanese came out ahead in a calculation contest in which he used an abacus.

A SKILLFUL JOB

By A NEW YORK DETECTIVE

"WELL, Clark, thanks to you, I've got my fellow safely caged. But for your hearty assistance I'm afraid I'd have had a nasty time of it if I hadn't been compelled to go back empty-handed."

The speaker was Joe Bloodgood, an English detective, who had come to New York in search of a noted criminal. I had joined in with him, and by my assistance, as he acknowledged by his words, the fugitive had been taken into custody.

He was then under lock and key, and Joe was waiting to get extradition papers. And while waiting he was my guest.

It was in the dead of winter.

We sat before a glowing fire, each with a good cigar between his teeth; between us was a small table, and on it a bowl of punch, which Joe had brewed in regular English style.

"You give me too much credit, Joe, for my part in the affair," I had answered.

"Not a bit of it; but—to enjoy this punch. Clark, it needs just such a night as this," suddenly switching from one subject to the other—"when the wind is howling outside, and you've got the curtains drawn, and are toasting your shins before a fire. Hand me the poker, will you, Clark?"

I passed the poker over, and Joe thrust it into the fire.

While it was heating neither said a word. When it was red-hot, Joe withdrew it, and plunged it into the punch.

"That's the finishing touch," he remarked. "There, just try a drop of that now—not too hot, nor too cold—isn't it fine?"

I admitted that it was.

And then, as we sipped it, we began to talk of professional matters, and began comparing crimes and criminals of England and America.

"We have more crime in high life than you do in this country," said Joe finally.

"Why so?" I inquired.

"Well, our laws of inheritance are at the bottom of it. By our laws you know the eldest son is nearly always the sole heir; or failing that, the nearest male relation, in most cases. Supposing that the life of only one being stands between you and a big estate and lots of money, and you are a poor devil, often going hungry—don't you see how great a temptation there is?"

"Yes," I assented. "By the way, did you ever get mixed up in such an affair?"

"Several of them. But there was that case of Durand Manor—that was the tough case. But I got to the bottom of it, and it was what I call a skillful job."

"Let's hear about it. Do you mind relating the story?"

"Not at all. Let me see," bending his head reflectively. "Well, I suppose it will make a clearer story by beginning at the beginning"; and I gave the story as nearly in his words as I can recall them.

JOE'S STORY.

Durand Manor, a very old and valuable estate, had descended through many generations of the Durands.

It was entailed in the direct line, the eldest son becoming the heir.

Old Sir Lemuel, at his death, left behind him two sons—Robert, the heir, and James; the former twenty-two, the latter twenty years of age. Now, as is apparent, in the case of Robert's death without leaving a son behind him, James succeeded his brother.

Having premised to this extent, I will now return to a day in early spring, as I sat in the office at our headquarters. It chanced that I was alone. The door softly opened, and on turning to see who it was, I beheld the figure of a deeply veiled, exquisitely shaped woman.

I arose and offered her a chair. She accepted it with a weary air, and a low-toned "Thank you!"

"Are you a detective?" she finally asked, in the sweetest and saddest tone I ever heard.

"I am; can I do anything for you?"

She looked closely at me for a full minute, and then slowly said:

"Can I trust you?"

"You can rely upon my honesty and sense of honor," I replied.

"And will it be necessary that every one here should know it?" she hesitatingly asked.

"Not if you will meet me elsewhere and tell me privately what you have to say."

"Where can I meet you?"

"Anywhere you say."

"My carriage is outside," struck by a sudden inspiration. "I can talk to you while driving."

"The very thing. Return to your carriage, and I will be down in a few minutes."

What was my surprise, when I reached the sidewalk, to find myself confronted by a carriage bearing a crest. The lady evidently was a person of rank. I hesitated about entering the carriage, but she motioned me imperatively to do so. For some little time we rode in silence.

"Are you a married man?" she finally asked.

"I am."

"And you love your wife?"

"I do."

"Singular questions you may think," she said, "but I ask them because I am called upon now to bare the secret of my own heart to you. I am Lady Templeton."

I bowed low.

"Robert Durand and I had been friends for years," she resumed. "At last we were more—we were lovers. The knowledge was kept from my family, for they had in view my marriage with another. A month ago Robert Durand and I met; he was to come again two days later, but he did not come. Instead, I heard that he had suddenly become insane—but I do not believe it."

"Ah! And what am I to do in the matter, Lady Templeton?"

"Find means to prove that he is not crazy," she promptly returned.

"That will be hard to do," I replied. "I have heard of his insanity, and you must be aware that several of the best physicians in England have examined him and pronounced him insane."

"I know it," she said calmly. "But they were deceived."

I was puzzled to know what to say. At last an inspiration moved me to ask:

"Do you suspect anybody? In other words, do you think his brother James is at the bottom of it?"

"I do," she firmly said. "He alone, beside Robert and I, knew of our love. Robert told him against my wishes. James is ambitious."

Such things had been heard of—a younger brother getting an elder out of the way. But the Durand name was too proud and spotless a one to carelessly traduce.

"I tell you that Robert is the victim of a conspiracy," she finally said. "Will you try to get to the bottom of it?"

Perhaps her absolute faith in the truth of what she said impressed me. And before I knew fairly what I was about I had committed myself, and had agreed to attempt to prove—in the face of half a dozen eminent physicians—that Robert Durand was not insane.

Lady Templeton placed a generous sum of money in my hand.

"When this is gone a note addressed to me will insure your receiving as much more," she said. "Leave me at the next corner; and above all, remember that you have in your keeping the secret of a woman's heart. Be true to your trust!"

"I will, I swear it," I solemnly said.

Well, half an hour afterwards I was calling myself a fool, a donkey, a blockhead, and a score of other equally uncomplimentary names, for in addition to feeling that I had set about a useless task, I did not know but I might get my head within the lion's jaws and have it snapped off.

However, I had given my word to investigate the case, and that promise I must keep.

I left London and went down to Durand Manor.

In view of the fact that Robert was pronounced hopelessly insane, making it sure that James would succeed to the estate, the father of a certain Lucy Darrel had withdrawn all objection, and the night that I reached the Manor James and Lucy were married.

I had stolen into the grounds and hidden among some shrubbery. I gazed in upon the scene of festivity. In the midst of it a wild and fearful shriek arose above all other sounds.

It was uttered by the mad brother, confined in an unused wing of the building.

Its intonation killed any doubt I might have had concerning Robert's insanity.

"I might as well go home," I thought. "I'm sorry for Lady Templeton, but she is mistaken—her lover is mad as a March hare."

Then a carriage rolled up to the door. In a few minutes the bridal couple would leave on their way to the train and their tour.

I was about to move out of the shrubbery, and return to the inn at the village, when I was caused to pause by the near approach of two men.

"Treat him kindly. Poor Bob! Use no harsh measures with him," said one of them.

It was James Durand. What, he, the wicked man Lady Templeton suspected him of being, and speak so kindly

of his unfortunate brother? It was a sin and a shame to even dream that such a thing were possible!

"I'll treat him kindly, sir, never fear," was the reply. This was the attendant who had charge of the insane man.

"That's right. Poor Bob, indeed! I hope he may not die while I am absent."

"No telling, sir; he's apt to go off in one of his violent fits at any minute," was the reply. "You'll be home in two months?"

"Yes."

"I shouldn't be at all surprised if he went off in just a month from now."

James Durand sighed.

"Well, if he's got to die, I suppose it might as well be while I am absent," and then they passed out of hearing.

Ten minutes later their automobile rolled swiftly away, and I returned toward the village in a brown study. The conversation I had heard did not exactly please me. I determined to get a glimpse of the attendant by daylight.

I did so the next day, and his appearance impressed me any way but favorably. I managed to obtain the information that his name was Thomson, that he was a professional attendant for the insane, and had been attached to some insane asylum near London.

Back to London I went, and my opinion of Thomson was not raised when I discovered the particular insane asylum to which he had been attached. It was a private institution, and it had long borne a bad name.

Once more I went to Durand Manor.

"That's a cousin of the Durands," said the landlord, as a young lady drove past in a basket phaeton. "She's playing lady up at the Manor-house until the heir comes back with his bride."

I wondered if she could be in the same house and not suspect the truth; if Robert Durand was not really crazy? She certainly would not assist in a crime.

In the afternoon, after dinner, I strolled away toward the Manor-house. The "outside grounds," as they were called, everybody was permitted to visit, strangers being supposed, however, not to pass the huge stone portals of the gates a short distance from the house.

I had nearly reached the gates when I heard the rapid fall of a horse's feet approaching from behind. Glancing back, I saw a lady on horseback, dressed in long riding habit and high hat.

"Do you belong here?" she demanded, as she reined in her horse on reaching my side.

"I do not."

"Well, no matter. Hold my horse—I will alight just within the gates."

Amused at her peremptory tone, yet nothing loath, I assisted her to dismount, and then took hold of the horse's bridle.

"Ah!"

This exclamation, suppressed but meaning, fell from her lips.

I glanced quickly around, and saw the young lady whom the landlord had said was Durand's cousin.

The equestrienne eyed a beautiful girl coming slowly along the path with dainty step, her uncovered head bent, her eyes fixed on the ground as if they searched for wild-flowers.

A look something like jealousy shot into the equestrienne's dark eyes. One moment the girl seemed to hesitate, and then she swiftly advanced toward the lady of the manor.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

Standing by the horse's head, I could hear the question asked, in freezing tones; a question which came so suddenly that the lady of the manor started in alarm.

"Who are you?" repeated the equestrienne in chilling tones, fastening her glowing eyes on the other.

"Excuse me, but who are you who enter these grounds in this manner?" having recovered her self-possession.

"No matter who I am," was the brusque reply. "Are you anything to James Durand?"

"I am!" haughtily.

"What?" hissed the equestrienne, clutching the girl fiercely by the hand.

"I am his cousin."

"Ah!"

This time it was in a tone of relief.

"Where is James Durand?"

"He is absent on his wedding tour," was the reply.

"What! James Durand married? When was it?"

"Two days ago."

The equestrienne reeled and almost fell. But she recovered herself, and with steady step returned to where I stood, and assisted her into the saddle. Her teeth were clenched, her eyes flamed, and as she rode away I heard her mutter:

"When he did not come I knew there was another woman in the case. So he has deserted me. I know his plans now."

Then there was something crooked about James Durand. I sprang after her, called to her, but she put whip to her horse, and I was soon distanced.

Instantly my mind was made up. I would follow up this woman, and extort from her what she knew.

I traced her to London, and there lost track of her. A month had passed, all but one day. In this time I had become convinced that James Durand was a villain, that he had paid Thomson to become his brother's executioner. And the morrow was the day on which Thomson had said, in my hearing, that Robert would probably die. Probably? In my present mind, I considered it as a certainty. But what could I do? With no more grounds than I now had, I could not get a warrant, and force an entrance to the manor.

Gloomy-minded and despondent I wandered through Hyde Park, and suddenly came face to face with the woman I had searched for in vain. Where skill had failed, accident had befriended me.

I spoke to her. At first she seemed inclined to resent it as a familiarity, but I uttered the names of James Durand, and found it talismanic.

"Yes, it is true!" she said, with her eyes flashing. "Sit down here, where we cannot be overheard. Listen! I was an actress, but pure in life as a babe. James Durand saw me—loved me—he said, and heaven knows I loved him. There is no need of telling you the story—it is sufficient that I loved him so blindly that I let him sink me until all sense of shame and degradation was lost. He told me that were he the heir he would marry me. The chance remark brought forth in my mind the plan of a devil.

"Give him drugs—make him mad," I told James. Robert Durand was drugged—made mad. He was examined while under the influence of these drugs, and the doctor said he was insane.

"No sooner does James Durand come into possession, or know that he is sure of succeeding, than he deserts me. With my kisses warm on his lips he plighted his troth with another woman, and the hour that I learned it my heart was filled with wormwood and gall. The love I bore him is now changed into hate; I have sworn to be revenged. He will cause Robert's death, I know, and then—then—I will put the halter around his neck."

But it was not my purpose to let Robert Durand be murdered.

To a passing "bobby" I gave a glimpse of my shield. He advanced, and we conveyed the woman to the lock-up. She repeated her story to a magistrate, and armed with a warrant I went to the Manor-house.

I arrested Thomson and released Robert Durand. To all appearances he was mad, but when the effects of the drug had passed off he was as sane as either of us.

We intercepted a letter from James Durand to Thomson, containing the following: "Is he dead yet? If not, it would be as well if he died at an early date."

I laid my plans to capture James Durand when he stepped foot in England. To avoid a scandal and a blemish on the name, his brother must have written to him, exposing the failure of his dastardly scheme, for James Durand took a vessel at Havre and came to America, and was killed afterward, I have heard, on the plains.

Robert Durand hushed the matter up, and Thomson got off scot free, so far as that job was concerned. But I dug into his history and got hold of some facts which sent him to prison for a long term.

The actress killed herself when she heard that her destroyer had escaped.

As for Robert and Lady Templeton, they were finally married. That I was handsomely paid you can well imagine. The case being kept so quiet I got no particular credit for it, though it was a skillful job.

STUMP HOUSES

THE fir trees of the Pacific Northwest occasionally attain such proportions, especially in the territory near Puget Sound, that the stumps after the trees have been cut down are employed for novel purposes. In some portions of Washington one can see these huge stumps, which have been hollowed out and actually made into temporary homes for settlers. To make a stump house, it is only necessary to remove the material from the interior, leaving enough to form walls of suitable thickness. Then a roof of boards or shingles is put over the top of the stump, holes are cut for windows and doors and the dwelling is practically ready for occupation. A number of these stumps have been used by settlers on what are called

logged-off lands, until they have been enabled to construct larger and more convenient dwellings. After the stump home has been vacated it is turned into a stable for the horses or sometimes into an inclosure for chickens or hogs. Next to the big tree of California, or sequoia as it is termed by the scientists, the fir as found in Washington and Oregon has the largest diameter of any tree in America and probably in the world. Some have been cut down which actually measured fifteen feet in diameter at the point where the incision was made. As they decay very rapidly after the timber has been removed, usually the interior can be hollowed out with very little difficulty.

A COAT SLEEVE

The Story of a New York Detective

By G. G. SMALL

CHAPTER THREE

GLANCING at me, the chief excused himself and returned to his private office.

"Well?" he said, turning up the gas.

I proceeded to tell him all.

"Humph!" and the old man wiped his glasses for at least a minute without speaking.

I felt certain that he was puzzled.

"I have telegraphed to all the large cities, including Chicago, for the police to be on the lookout for them, but I don't believe they have left the city—that is, altogether."

"But their baggage was evidently checked for there," said I.

"That is an old snap to throw detectives off the scent. It has often been played on me. They may have announced their intention of going to Chicago, but, as I said before, they have probably gone in another direction. For instance, having the checks for their baggage, they could easily get it put off at Albany, and from there take a train for Boston or Montreal, probably to the latter. But I don't believe they intend to leave New York. It is the headquarters of such people as they are; and even if they have gone, they will not remain away very long. You may not see them again in their old haunts; they may return by an entirely different route after they think they have thrown off all suspicious detectives from their track. You need not do any more to-day, but to-morrow you must put on your disguise and begin sharp work. Good-night."

"Good-night."

He turned down the gas, and we left his private office together.

I felt that the "needle" was in a much larger hay-mow than ever now.

I was young in that particular branch of the business then.

Well, now I will turn to another root of the mystery.

I refer to the three-cornered bit of glass I had found near the scene of the murder.

It was one of his old detectives to whom Chief Matsell intrusted this part of the business, and he finally found a hack that stands, or rather did stand, on Union Square.

These night-drivers are called "owls" by some and "hawks" by others, but they are a bad lot anyhow. Chief Matsell sent many of them to the penitentiary, and now there is quite a respectable lot of drivers to be found in the city.

Yes, he found a hack there with a broken window, into which the piece of glass I had found exactly fitted, and he at once arrested the driver, and took him and his carriage to headquarters.

The poor driver was nearly frightened out of his life,

for, as it afterwards proved, he knew nothing at all about the matter.

The owner of several of the carriages went to headquarters and not only swore, but brought others in his employ to swear, that this driver had only been employed a few days, and that a fellow who was called "Mike" was the driver on the night of the tragedy.

So this clue turned out worthless, and the same detective (he has died since then) was set upon the task of finding Mike, whose picture adorned the Rogues' Gallery, and who was known as a bad one by the police.

He was just the fellow to take part in such a tragedy as this. Indeed, he was ready at all times to do anything for money, and he undoubtedly got well paid for this job.

But he resigned the following day, and had not been seen since, although the proprietor, to sustain his assertion, produced his books to show that he had made him pay for the broken window before settling up with him.

But if Mike was in the city, he had the right man after him.

Well, to return to my part of the matter.

I slightly disguised myself the next day, and started out on what promised to be a long hunt, if not a hopeless one.

I walked the streets, and I haunted in depots.

I had my eyes upon everybody, and I kept it up for four days without result.

Every night I reported to the chief, and each time received words of encouragement.

Meantime, he received a reply to his telegram to New Orleans, asking about Louise Wilbur, and we were neither of us disappointed, of course, at hearing that no such person lived there.

No reply came from any of the marshals and chiefs of police to whom a description of the Wilburs was sent, which convinced Chief Matsell that they were still in the city. Indeed, he wouldn't give up that point.

Everybody seemed to succeed better than I did, and I began to feel discouraged.

The detective set upon the track of Mike run him to cover inside of two days, and he was locked up at headquarters with a view of trying to make him squeal.

But the prisoner was not a squealer, and although they held the threat of sending him back to Sing Sing, whence he had escaped five years before, over his head, he would not give anything away.

So he was held, and in case nothing could be proven against him, or he would not squeal on his accomplices, he was to be eventually sent back to serve out his time.

It may seem mean and selfish in me to say so, but I rather felt pleased than otherwise to think that the prisoner would not squeal.

The piece of glass I had found led to his arrest. The job was mine, and if I could not work it out successfully, I almost felt as though I didn't want anybody to.

Well, here we were, at the end of a week, no nearer to catching the authors of that crime than at first.

So "The Sixteenth Street Wharf Mystery," as it had come to be called, gradually faded from men's minds.

Events of such a startling nature are so quickly succeeded by others equal to or surpassing it, that they seem to tread upon each other's heels.

Especially is this the case in New York, a city containing the scum of the earth, that has either been sent here by foreign governments simply to get rid of their ungovernable characters, or those who have fled from other countries to avoid the consequences of crimes which they perpetrate here.

Indeed, my brother detectives were at work upon two other mysterious murder cases which had startled the public the one I was at work upon.

These things, as I say, live only a short time in the public eye.

New events overshadow them, partially because they are new, and partially perhaps because it is human nature not to always mourn or to wonder long over anything.

But not so with the police, especially with the detective branch of it.

Once a crime has been committed, it is photographed upon the detective's mind, even if he is not detailed upon it.

I have known detectives at work upon one case to unearth another, simply because each particular of it was impressed upon his mind.

It is not only his business (and where rewards are offered it is often a lucrative one), but it becomes a sort of second nature to them.

This I know from experience.

I am wandering from the relation of the story I started to tell you.

Now let me return to it.

One night, when I came to make my report to Chief Matsell, I found him buried in thought.

But he started up when I entered his office.

"Well?"

This was always his salutation to men who were acting directly under his special orders.

"Nothing new, chief," said I sadly.

"No news is good news oftentimes, officer. Do not get discouraged."

"I promise never to if you do not," said I.

"Sir, I never get discouraged, and I never give up a thing I once set myself at work upon until it is finished. And you must not. Think of the great French detective who spent five years in unearthing a single crime. Think of being sent to the galleys just to mingle with the slaves there in the hope of finding out what he wanted. Think of his final success, and his position in police history to-day."

The old chief was an enthusiast in his calling.

"Well, sir, as I said before, I promise never to tire or get discouraged, but to push on as long as I live, if you will not tire of me."

"Officer —, I have faith in you, or I should never have put you upon this case. You have done some remarkably good work on it, and because you have not succeeded sooner is not your fault."

"Thank you, chief."

"But something has happened to-day."

"In relation to this case?"

"Yes; I heard of it this afternoon. It is a piece of the same strange story, and I want you to look into it. Yesterday there appeared before the public administrator a woman who claims to be the widow of this Thomas Page."

"The widow?"

"Yes, that is her claim. What her proofs are I do not know. Of course, the whole thing will have to go before the surrogate. I have written a letter to the public administrator, and one to the surrogate, asking them to give you all the assistance in their power, as a detective acting under special orders in the case of the murder of Thomas Page. Take the letters to them. Act with all caution, and see if there is anything in it, or if this woman is an adventuress trying to get at his money. Somehow or other it seems to me that something is sure to come out of it."

"Mystery upon mystery!"

"Yes. This Page was supposed to be a bachelor, and now comes forward a woman claiming to be his widow. At all events, you may learn something that will be of importance to the working up of the case."

"Possibly."

"There is nothing in the world so strange as truth—remember that."

"But suppose this is not truth?"

"When blended into this case it must become truth. The lie that Miss Wilbur told you was a truth when taken in connection with the case, for it is a part of it, and the great truth is that a murder has been committed, and everything connected with it is simply negative truth."

"I shall follow your instructions, chief."

"Do so. Present these letters to-morrow. Good-night."

"Good-night"; and with the regulation salute, for which he was a great stickler, I withdrew.

Here was something startling.

What would come out of it?

I slept but little that night for thinking about it.

The next morning I waited upon the public administrator and presented my letter of introduction.

"Ah! my old friend Matsell!" said the official, glancing at the bottom before he had read the letter.

"Yes, and my honored chief," said I.

"Well, I am willing to render you all the assistance in my power; but in what way? What is it you wish to know?" said he, folding up the letter.

"I have been working up this case for some time, under the impression that the late Thomas Page was a bachelor, and now that a widow turns up, I would like to find out something about her, for it may be the means of my finding out something else."

"Oh, you detectives are a queer lot; but I suppose I shall have to humor you," said the official, smiling and reaching for a pigeon-hole in his desk.

He took out a packet of letters and placed them before me.

"There. Do you know Page's handwriting?"

"Very well."

"Then go through these letters and tell me what you think of them."

I took the letters and went over them carefully.

There were five of them, bearing dates extending over two years.

I had familiarized myself with Page's handwriting, and had several specimens of it in my pocket for comparison. They were undoubtedly written by him.

They were couched in pleasant but not affectionate terms, but they all related to money matters, and were addressed to Mrs. Thomas Page, Philadelphia General Post-Office.

The one bearing date a month or so prior to his untimely taking off, possessed the most interest for me. It ran as follows:

"NEW YORK, June 1st.

"Eve—Yours of yesterday came to hand in due season, but I cannot say that I was pleased with it. You will forever harp upon the one little thing that separated us. But it will do no good. We have not lived together in ten years, and we never shall do so again, although I always have and always shall support you well, so long as you behave yourself and do not annoy me. If you wish a divorce, as you say you do, why don't you get it? I certainly shall not hinder you, and will, moreover, pay the expense of getting it for you. As for my getting married again, that is all stuff and nonsense. I have the instincts of a bachelor, and should never have become a benedict. We have no children to bind us together, and probably it would be much better for us both if we were apart for the remainder of our lives.

"Inclose find one hundred dollars from

"Your husband,

"THOMAS PAGE."

Both of us compared the handwriting of the letters, and especially the one quoted, and both agreed that they were the same.

"Well, what do you make of it?" the official asked.

"I hardly know, only I think it cannot be doubted that Page had a wife at the time of his death, and that these letters were written to her by him."

"That is the way it looks to me."

"Have you anything else?"

"Yes, here is their marriage certificate and a letter from the parson who married them," said he, producing them.

The marriage certificate bore date fifteen years before.

The parson's letter was dated only a few days before.

"Anything else?" I asked.

"Yes. Here is a photograph of Page and his wife, taken soon after their marriage."

I should never have recognized Page, but I never saw him until after death; and as this was taken when he was a much younger man, why, of course it was not to be wondered at.

"The thing looks perfectly straight to me, and I have made up my mind to turn the case over to the surrogate and let him proceed to administer upon the estate as he sees fit."

"How much does it amount to?"

"Something over five hundred thousand dollars," said he.

"Whew! There is a windfall for a widow! And has there no will been found?"

"None that I have heard of."

"What sort of a looking person is Mrs. Page now?" I asked.

"Oh, she looks but little as she does in the picture, and that could not of course be expected. She is a woman of about forty, medium-sized, rather good-looking, and somewhat fashionable even in her mourning."

"I should like to see her."

"You may do so this afternoon, for she is to call upon me in relation to the business."

"Can you give me a desk, and make a clerk of me while she is here?"

"I guess so."

"And will you turn her over to me on some pretense or other, which will allow me to ask her a few questions?"

"Yes. I see no harm in that."

"And I should like to disguise myself a trifle."

"What for?"

"Well, I might have occasion to do business with her again in some other way."

"All right; for my friend Matsell's sake, I will do almost anything," said he, laughing.

"What desk may I occupy?"

"That one, there. It is unoccupied at present."

"Very well. I will return here in an hour."

"And she will be here half an hour later," said the official, consulting his watch.

"All right," said I; and with this understanding I left his office.

Now I had no idea of what I was going to do, for you will understand that I was working in the dark all the while.

But something told me that good would come out of it.

Besides that, my old chief had told me what to do, and I was bound to follow instructions whether anything came out of it or not.

So at the appointed time I was on hand, and took my position at the desk as a clerk.

My disguise was simple, but simple though it was, the public administrator failed to recognize me, and I felt that I had at least succeeded in this part of the business.

I consulted with him, assuring him that I only wished to satisfy myself on one or two points bearing on the murder of her husband, and so the whole thing was easily understood.

Promptly on time there was shown into the office a middle-aged lady, described by the public official as well as I can describe her.

There was nothing remarkable about her.

She seemed to be an ordinary woman who had been cold and handsome in her younger days, even as she was now.

I thought I could see traces of sorrow upon her face. She had evidently suffered.

It had been an ill-mated pair, and living apart had worn upon her more than it had upon him.

He was regarded as a bachelor, and true enough it was that his instincts ran that way.

Such men should never get married.

She held a conversation with the public administrator, but she spoke so low that I could not hear what she said, although what he said was a good guide for me.

Finally he led her along to the desk at which I was seated, and said:

"Before the business can be settled, even so far as I am concerned, you will please answer any questions which my deputy may ask you, as his signature is essential."

She bowed respectfully, and took a seat in the chair which had been placed for her.

I pushed aside some writing which I was pretending to be engaged in, and taking down a book which I had purposely placed in one of the ledger spaces, I opened it.

"Your full name, if you please?" said I.

"Eve Page."

"Your maiden name?"

"Eve Filley."

"Where were you born?"

"In the city of Philadelphia."

"What is your age?"

"Forty-one."

"How long have you been married?"

"Fifteen years. The certificate is here."

"I know it. How long have you and your late husband lived apart?"

"About ten years."

"What was the cause of your separation?"

"Incompatibility of temper, I suppose. He never was a domestic man, and notwithstanding the affection he seemed to have for me before marriage, the relation

seemed irksome to him soon afterward, and we separated, as will be seen by his letters to me."

She kept a perfumed handkerchief at her face nearly all the time.

"Has he always supported you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he ever appear to want to get rid of you for the purpose of marrying somebody else?"

"No, sir, never. On the contrary, he always said that if he were single he would never marry."

"You lived in Philadelphia?"

"No. 110 Arch street, No. 501 Girard avenue, No. 708 Walnut street."

Heavens, how straight she was!

"Have you labored at anything during the time?"

"Nothing but my housework."

"Were you aware of your husband's course of life while living apart from you in New York?"

"I knew that he resided in various places; but his residence for the past three years or more was at the Merchants' Hotel."

"Did he ever tell you, or hint to you, of any relations which he bore to other women here?"

"Never; I do not believe he cared for women. But, come to think of it, I believe he did say something about taking a ride once with the daughter of a friend of his. I dare say he did, for he was always fond of show; and behind a fancy team, and beside a pretty girl whom others would admire and speak of, he would, for the time being, be a happy man. But I do not believe he would care for the lady himself."

"When did you first hear of his murder?"

"I first learned of it through the papers."

"Did you know that he was rich?"

"Yes; he was rich when we married."

"Has he any other relatives?"

"None that I know of, with the exception of a cousin somewhere in South America."

"Did he ever intimate that he was going to give you his property?"

"No, sir; he never spoke of giving it to any one."

"And you claim it, as his widow?"

"I do."

"Have you other proof than what you have offered, that you were the wife of Thomas Page?"

"No, sir."

"That is all," said I, and, getting up from my desk, I walked over to that of my superior for the time being, leaving her there with her tears and perfumed handkerchief.

"Well, what have you made?" he asked.

"Nothing. To all appearances she is as straight as a string," said I.

"I think so, too. Madam, I will turn this whole business over to the surrogate to let him act upon it as he sees fit. You can call upon him any time after to-day, and he will give you all the information you require," he added, turning from me to her.

"Thank you, sir," said she, and, gathering up a few parcels, which she had placed upon a table, she retired.

"So you are bluffed, are you?" asked the public administrator, after she had gone.

"Yes; I must confess that I am, so far. I have the addresses she has given me in Philadelphia, and they may either confirm or disprove her story. But, at all events, she seems all right up to the present time."

"I think she is."

"But I must confess that she is not the person whom I half-suspected her to be."

"Oh, well, the best of detectives are liable to get upon a wrong scent once in a while, even my old friend, Mattsell, than whom there never was a better officer. Good-day."

This was a hint that my time was up, that I was discharged from my position of clerk to the public administrator, and so I took off my disguise, took up my hat and made my way into the street.

Thrown off completely!

Yes, I was once more at sea, and all the castles I had built had fallen into it after me.

While pondering over what I should do, and which way I should go, I espied Mrs. Page coming around the City Hall—she having evidently lost her way, being a stranger.

A sudden impulse seized me to follow her, and as I had removed my disguise, and looked but little like the clerk she had seen a few moments before, I thought I could do so with impunity.

I followed close behind her.

She got into a Broadway car, and I got into the same one.

We sat beside each other, as chance would have it, and I actually passed her fare up to the conductor without her ever suspecting who I was, or that I was shadowing her.

I watched to see if she appeared any way different from what she had.

But no. She was still calm, thoughtful, and lady-like.

She was dressed plainly and modestly, and, look as close as I would, I could but acknowledge that her grief was genuine.

But so long as I was in for it I was bound to find out all I could regarding her.

She stopped at an uptown hotel, and after she had gone in the ladies' entrance, I went into the office.

Going to the register in a careless sort of way, I turned over the leaves of the book, running my eye over the registered names in search of hers.

Presently I saw it, under date of a week ago, and written in a feminine hand.

"Mrs. Thomas Page, Philadelphia, Pa."

What more could I do?

What could I learn if I bored the clerk with questions?

In all probability he would think me impertinent, and snub me; and as I had received all the set-backs that I wanted that day, I concluded to report "progress" to my chief and go home.

This I did.

He was not satisfied.

In relation to what I had done I do not say it, but he was evidently disappointed at the way one of his theories had turned out.

"Don't give that woman up until you know all about her. Go to Philadelphia and inquire at the addresses she has given you, and if everything proves straight, why, we can safely abandon her. If you do get a rebuff every day, don't mind it. Keep at it until there is absolutely nothing left to stand on. Good-night."

Talk about untangling a mystery! It seemed that this one was becoming more and more snarled and confusing every day in spite of all we could do.

But this is the way with some cases which detectives have to work up.

The more they work them the more tangled they seem to become, until finally some little thing will luckily straighten the whole business.

(To be continued)

CURRENT NEWS

HUNTER LASSOS BEAR

T. J. McMullin, a government hunter, accompanied by Robert Reid, with several hunting dogs, had a thrilling fight with a grizzly bear and her two cubs twenty-two miles southeast of Taos, N. M.

VERMIN KILL WOODCOCK

A. N. Washburn of Bethel, Vt., who has a natural breeding place for woodcock, says that he has found the remains of woodcock, everything having been eaten except the feathers. He has been unable to discover the vermin killing the woodcock.

MILLION BRITONS DEAD

It is officially announced that during the war the forces of Great Britain lost nearly 1,000,000 men, killed or dead through various causes. Recently it was stated that the British losses totalled 658,704, but this number did not take into consideration men who were reported missing who actually lost their lives but of whom there is no trace.

SUFFERED FROM A QUEER CAUSE

A little girl of four was taken suddenly with intense earache, but there was no fever and no pus. By the third day the child had general convulsions, and then something was seen in the ear which resembled a wormlike mass from a tube of tooth paste. It was seized with a Kocher forceps and proved to be a male ascaris, a parasite type of worm, nearly six inches long.

EPSOM SALTS AS TREATMENT FOR LOCKJAW

Excellent results through the treatment of tetanus by injections of magnesium sulphate (epsom salts) are reported by the *Bulletin* of the Medical Association of Porto Rico. In some cases antitoxin was given in addition. In one case the patient, an infant, was regarded as hopeless, and magnesium sulphate was injected merely as a palliative. The patient and mother did not come back for treatment after the third day, but five months later the child was seen in good health. In another case convulsions ceased after two injections of the salt.

FISH SKIN DRESSES

Among the most wonderful garments worn at the present day are the curious fish skin dresses of the wealthy women of the Gold tribe, living along the Amur River, East Siberia. Though they can neither read nor write, these people are producing astonishing ornaments, designs and embroidery work. The dress is composed of several layers of fish skin, the undermost representing the skin of the garment proper, the uppermost showing the ornaments in their cut-out forms. Between these two layers is inserted a middle layer, which serves as a background, throwing out distinctly all parts of the ornaments. The pieces of fish skin forming the ornaments are generally colored blue. The front and back of the dress is adorned with these cut-out pieces of fish skin sewed with fish skin thread.

INFLUENZA AMONG AFRICAN MONKEYS

An epidemic of influenza is ravaging the coast of West Africa. In Sierra Leone the deaths are said to average 1,000 a week. It is reported that the malady has spread to the interior and has attacked chimpanzees and monkeys, which are dying in numbers of the disease. A despatch from Kingston, Jamaica, states that influenza is epidemic in the West Indies and is causing many deaths. Chili is also reported to be in the throes of an influenza epidemic. It is said that in some places near Santiago the deaths number three out of every ten cases.

SKUNK CAUGHT BY ANGLER

Bert Hamilton, fishing the other night in Storage Dam, Columbus, Ohio, using flies, called out to his companions, Frank Mobley and William Behnen: "Fellows, I've got a channel cat that must be a monster by the way he pulls."

In the darkness Hamilton was struggling with the prize that refused to be drawn in.

"Flash your light, Frank," said Hamilton, and Mobley came close and aimed the light in the direction of the line. In the water they saw something black with a white stripe along its back swimming about in a circle and snapping viciously at the line. It was a skunk. Hamilton cut the line immediately, before it could release the liquid that has such a frightful odor.

LINCOLN HONEYMOON COST \$4 A WEEK

The career of Abraham Lincoln furnishes a good argument to the young man whose suit is opposed by the parents of his sweetheart because he had not yet gained financial success. An extremely poor young lawyer, strong objections were raised when he announced his intention to marry Mary Todd; but, as usually happens, the opposition was disregarded, and the wedding took place in 1842. The honeymoon had to be on an economical scale, and so the hotel bill for the first happy week of the young couple's life together was only \$4. It was spent at the Globe Tavern in Springfield, Ill., where they were married.

NEW EXPLOSIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The manufacture of a new explosive, known as Sengite, to meet the growing shortage of nitro-glycerine explosive, now used by the mining industry in South Africa, has been recently commenced.

This new explosive, which has a guncotton base, is the result of experiments conducted by Kynoch, Ltd., at their Umbogintwini (Natal) factory. This explosive is said to be so insensitive to shock as to be quite safe if hammered with a steel tool. Accidental explosions in mining, caused by drilling into unfired holes, would not occur when this explosive was used.

The name Sengite originated with the manufacturers. The first four letters were derived by using the initial letters in the following words: "Substitute explosive, no glycerine." The last three letters are taken from the word "dynamite."

PENCIL IN POCKET SAVES LIFE OF LAD

A metal lead pencil in his pocket stopped a bullet and practically saved the life of Glen Catlin, twelve-year-old son of Reverend Catlin, of Council Bluffs, Iowa, during a war game here.

Several boys had built a cave in the outskirts of the town, and while young Catlin was advancing to the cave Eddie Emig, fourteen, who was standing guard, fired a .22-caliber rifle in the general direction from which the Catlin boy was advancing. The bullet tore a button off his coat and was stopped by the metal.

SUBSTITUTES FOR LEATHER

At the recent exposition of the chemical industries at Grand Central Palace there was an interesting exhibit of leather made from the skin of fishes, shark, porpoise and tuna fish, which showed it to be as full of good qualities as is leather made from the skins of animals.

Scientists at the Pratt Institute and the United States Bureau of Fisheries have been experimenting upon fish skin as a substitute for leather, and the raw hide of sharks and porpoises already is in commercial use. Porpoise skin razor strops have been used for years, and other kinds of fish leather would have been on the market long ago, the scientists say, had it not been that there was an abundance of real leather.

THE DUGOUT

Dugouts are usually associated with by-gone days, but they still figure in Maryland navigation. A few are even being made to-day. This dugout is the Chesapeake canoe of the Eastern Shore oystermen. It is made by placing three pine logs side by side and fastening them together with wooden pins. Then the inside is dug out with an adze and the outside similarly shaped. The result is a non-sinkable craft, with bow and stern alike, that is rigged with two tails and sometimes a "jigger" as well. From these boats the oysters are taken up with tongs. When the oyster season is over these canoes are painted and aquatic races are indulged in by the oystermen.

THE LIGHTEST KNOWN WOOD

A consular report from Port Limon, Costa Rica, gives interesting details concerning the trade of that region in balsa or corkwood (*Ochroma*), said to be the lightest of all known woods. It has long been used in tropical America for making canoes and a special type of raft, also known as balsa. It is very porous and a good insulator against heat and cold, and the report above mentioned states that it would be valuable for airplane construction. The young trees are soft and very sensitive to injury from vines. The trees are dioecious, the male tree being known as *burillo* and the female as *balsa real*. The shipment of balsa wood has apparently not assumed large proportions, owing to the difficulty of transporting it from its native forests to the railway.

A NOVEL SCHEME

A new device for robbing flats was hit upon by a man who is now in jail in Paris. Dressed as a workman and carrying a bucket filled with a mysterious compound, he was in the habit of calling at flats saying that he had come by the landlord's orders to disinfect the place. During the operation such an unpleasant smell was emitted that the tenant hastily decamped to the room farthest removed from the scene of "disinfection," leaving the coast clear for the burglar. The latter at length presented himself at a flat which happened to be occupied by the landlord himself and a few minutes afterward he was handed over to the police.

MEN AND ARMS CAPTURED

The British took 200,000 prisoners on the western battle front from January 1 to November 5, inclusive, according to an official statement made in the House of Commons November 7. In the same period the French captured 140,000, the Americans 50,000 and the Belgians 15,000, making a total of 405,000 captured during the year on this front alone.

The armies of the Allies, since the great offensive began on the western front on July 15 have captured 6,217 cannon, 33,622 machine guns and 3,907 mine throwers, according to a press message of November 3 from Paris. During October the Allies captured 108,343 prisoners, including 2,472 officers, as well as 2,064 cannon, 13,649 machine guns and 1,193 mine throwers.

CURIOUS USES OF VEGETABLE OILS

The process of crushing the seeds of various plants for the purpose of extracting the oils contained therein has been known and employed in Japan for centuries, the art probably having been brought over from the Asiatic mainland during the seventh and eighth centuries, anno Domini, when Chinese and Korean civilization was introduced into Japan. Rapeseed oil has long been used for frying fish and lobsters and is to-day the principal fat in the Japanese diet. Cottonseed oil was used as a substitute for rapeseed oil and for lighting purposes, while perilla oil was and is to-day used as the water-proofing element in the manufacture of paper umbrellas and oiled-paper lanterns. The ancient Japanese also understood the extraction of oil from woods, as "tung," or wood oil, was used before the coming of the foreigners. "Tsubaki" oil, a highly pungent and cheap essential oil extracted from the camellia plant, has been used in the past as it is to-day by the Japanese women in arranging their elaborate head-dresses.

LADDERS FOR FISH TO CLIMB UPON

Do you know that fish actually jump 100-foot dams in their migrations each spring to the headwaters of the rivers in which they spawn? asks the *Popular Science Monthly*.

Of course, this 100-foot jump is not made all in one leap, but in a number of short leaps of eight inches each. This feat is made possible by what is called a fish ladder.

This ladder must be placed in all river dams in which fish such as salmon swim up to the river heads to spawn. Fish will not spawn anywhere except in the still headwaters, and it is necessary that they arrive there with the least exertion. The government makes it obligatory that at least one fish ladder be built into every dam across such rivers.

Fish ladders, while they may be built of wood, stone or concrete, according to the material of which the dam is constructed, are all alike in principle, and consist of a trough which begins at water level on the low side of the dam, and then extends upward in several zig-zag steps to a point below the water level on the up-side of the stream. Water enters at the top end and flows down and out at the bottom. Its flow, however, is not free like that in a sluice, but is retarded by means of cross-pieces at regular intervals in the trough.

The water in the ladder is continually flowing down and out at the bottom, forming a running stream, up which the fish may swim, with a choice of passing from the first pool to the next and so on up by swimming through the top notches from one pool to the next higher one. The jump in the latter case is not more than eight inches, and can be done easily by almost any kind of fish.

AN INDIAN SOLDIER EXPERT WITH THE RIFLE

The 136th Infantry, one of the units of the 34th Division now at Camp Dix, N. J., claims to have had in its ranks until recently one of the greatest rifle shots in the army, according to the New York Sun. This man is Private Pierre Flomebue, an Indian, who enlisted at Camp Cody, N. M. Flomebue, who is a typical Indian, attracted no particular notice until he was ordered to the rifle range for practice with other recruits. It is claimed he had little experience in shooting and had never used an army rifle, yet the first day he made a possible 50 at 200 yards, rapid fire, and since then has repeated this and also made good at other ranges, both slow and rapid fire, in no case falling below 48. Men in his company say he is almost uncanny in his use of the army rifle. One of his feats is to make an outline of himself on the target with shots at 200 yards. So expert is this man that he was recently sent to France to serve on the battle line as a sharpshooter.

BLAZING MONITOR SUNK TO SAVE DOVER

The latest interesting wartime happening now released for publication is a story of how Dover narrowly missed being blotted out just prior to the last Belgian offensive.

The harbor was crowded with war vessels of all descriptions, including four monitors about to start out for the Belgian coast to co-operate with the land offensive. Suddenly an explosion shook the town and soon it was discovered that the Monitor *Glatten* was furiously ablaze in the harbor. It is stated that Admiral Keyes boarded the *Glatten* and, realizing the catastrophe both to the city and the other warships that would result if the *Glatten's* magazines exploded, ordered air sirens blown to clear the streets. Orders were also given to sink the *Glatten*.

The destroyer *Broke* succeeded in hitting her with three torpedoes in a part away from her magazines, thus sinking her and saving Dover.

WHAT WHITE PATCHES ON FINGERNAILS MEAN

Many people have white markings on their fingernails, which are usually a subject for fables. Just what they mean is not generally known. Dr. R. Sabouraud of Paris writes in the *Medical Press* that marbled nails, that is to say, nails bearing white blotches, have a definite significance with relation to health.

They may indicate either of three things: nervousness, skin affection or an early stage of tuberculosis. They are frequently met with in cases of goitre accompanied with skin disease.

Marbled nails are more frequent in women than in men, but with the latter they have more significance. They are not a grave symptom, being met with in people who remain healthy for years. Yet they indicate a departure from full health, and a probability of some trouble or other developing in the course of time, perhaps tuberculosis or skin disease, and when indicating nervousness, this in itself is an unhealthy condition.

In short, concludes Dr. Sabouraud, the existence of marbled nails is a danger signal, not only demonstrating in the apparently healthy a latent weakness, but also in conditions of poor health an augury that serious results may ensue.

WOODEN CANNON

Many strange devices have been employed as weapons of war, but probably the only occasion on which wooden cannon were successfully employed and fired was during one of Aurunzebe's campaigns in the Deccan. The imperial forces closed about a town which was believed to

be totally unprovided with artillery, but to their astonishment the advance was met by the thunder of cannon, and a regular siege was instituted. The report as to the lack of artillery had been perfectly true, although there was a good supply of ammunition within the town. The commandant, however, at the approach of the enemy, had set every carpenter in the city to work making wooden cannon, and night and day this remarkable manufacture was kept up, there being, fortunately, large stores of heavy timber available. It was found that the improvised guns were good for but one shot, but for that shot they were quite as effective as the iron guns of the period. Moreover, every ball that fell in the town was promptly sent back, the usual process being reversed, and the caliber of the guns being made to conform to the size of the balls. So stout was the resistance that the siege was finally raised, much to the glory of the commandant and the wooden guns.

SUPERSTITION OF THE MOON'S RAYS

"The majority of Porto Ricans have instilled in them from earliest infancy a superstitious dread of the full moon's rays," said James A. Purman, an expert builder of sugar mills, who has just returned from that country. "It is a curious sight to the American visitor to note men and women going along the streets and highways of the island with umbrellas raised over their heads at night, and the more brilliantly the moon is shining the greater will be the number of people who are thus protecting themselves from her beams. Once in the sequestered rural districts a gay mounted cavalier will be met at midnight, his bridle rein in one hand and an upraised umbrella in the other. It looks weird and also ridiculous, but the natives do it for a peculiar reason. They are possessed of the conviction that Luna's full light striking upon mortals is almost sure to make them mentally unsound, that is to say lunatics, and that is why they interpose a shield between them and her dazzling brightness. To sleep where the moon could shine full upon one is, in the view of a Porto Rican, to tempt fate, and it would be a daring one who could be hired to do it for any consideration."

NEWEST THINGS

A patent has been granted for an arm-chair which can be extended to form a couch.

That it has coal enough to last eight centuries is the claim of Newcastle, England.

Japan has been added to the countries using motion pictures for educational purposes.

Pronged grips that fit the palm of the hand have been invented for handling cakes of ice.

An aviation school has been established at Lima under subsidy of the Peruvian Government.

As a time saver a key-ring has been invented with a separate section for the key most used.

Equal quantities of alcohol and benzole are used to make an efficient motor fuel in France.

Cork platforms have been invented to add to the comfort of traffic policemen in wet streets.

Japan has eighty artificial dye factories with an annual capacity in excess of 10,100,000 pounds.

A new machine for binding papers together makes its own staples from a spool of wire as needed.

The River Nile is believed to contain more varieties of fish than any other stream in the world.

One of the newer electric heating pads is equipped with a thermostat to keep its temperature even.

Italian scientists have perfected a highly nutritious bread that is made from partially sprouted grain.

HOW "PUNCTUATION" WAS INVENTED

The first man to develop a rational and comprehensive system of punctuation was the famous Venetian painter, Aldus Manutius, who was assisted by his son, Paulus, the work being carried on by the latter's son, Aldus, Jr. Aldus Manutius, also known as Tobaldo Mannuci and Aldo Manuzio, was not only the founder of the famous *Aldine Press* and one not only the founder of the famous but he was the father of punctuation in modern times. Aristophanes, the ancient Alexandria grammarian, invented a system of punctuation, but it was wholly lost during the dark ages, and no attempt was made to revive it until the reign of Charlemagne. Under the latter's direction, Warnesfried and Alouin formulated a punctuation system, but there were no rules governing the use of their signs, and they were practically worthless. Aldus Manutius and his successors of the *Aldine Press* increased the number of punctuation marks and established fixed rules for their use. Later grammarians introduced some improvements, and the rules for punctuation have been changed somewhat and new ones added, but the system of the Manutii formed the solid foundation for that now in use.

GERMANS' LIVE WIRE TRAP

An American patrol, having passed the first line of German entanglements and approached the second line on a recent raid, was suddenly cut off by a current of electricity sent along the wire line.

Instead of attempting an immediate return to their trenches, which would have meant certain death from electrocution or machine-gun fire, the American clung close to the earth, reports the *Electrical Experimenter*, and, later, when the electricity was cut off, returned in safety to their positions.

It was a thrilling experience for the patrol. The men set out from the American position in the hope of encountering the enemy at a point in the German trenches. They had succeeded in getting through the first line and had crawled on until the second line was reached. When they were just about to start under the second line there was a bluish glow, and, turning around, they saw long, livid sparks playing through the barbed wire of the first line. The enemy had turned on a powerful electric current. The patrolers quickly flattened out on the ground, thinking they had been discovered and expecting to hear momentarily machine-gun bullets singing overhead. Nothing of the kind happened, however. Apparently the Germans merely turned on the current by chance, hoping that if any Americans were within the entanglements they would be killed on the wire or while trying to get out. The patrol returned safely to the American lines when the electricity was turned off. Usually a high tension alternating current is used to charge barbed wire entanglements; a potential of several thousand volts is necessary.

CENSUS OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

The Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, issues the following:

The results of a census of the Virgin Islands (formerly the Danish West Indies) have just been published in an octavo volume of 174 pages. The inventory was made, at the request of the Secretary of the Navy, by the Bureau of the Census of the Department of Commerce, under the supervision of Mr. Eugene F. Hartley, chief statistician for manufactures of the Census Bureau.

The report shows that by this latest territorial acquisition the area of the United States was increased slightly more than 132 square miles, this area being practically

that of the three principal islands, St. Croix (Santa Cruz), St. John and St. Thomas. There are, in addition, about 50 small islands or cays, the largest about 1 mile square.

Interesting and significant is the fact that while the United States acquired title to the Virgin Islands by treaty with Denmark on August 4, 1916, after negotiations of more than half a century, the language of the people is English, though the islands were under the Danish flag for 245 years.

In 1917 the value of the exports from the United States to the islands was \$1,416,342, and of the imports from the islands \$1,259,607.

The population as of November 1, 1917, was 26,051, and comparison with earlier censuses shows the population has steadily decreased from 31,718 in 1885 to 26,051 in 1917. Of the total persons in 1917, 1,922 were white, 19,523 were Negro, and 4,606 mixed. The sex distribution was 11,999 males and 14,052 females. The returns showed 5,281 persons, or 24.9 per cent. of the population 10 years of age or over to be illiterate. The population of each of the three principal islands in 1917 was as follows: St. Croix, 14,901; St. Thomas, 10,191, and St. John, 959. The islands contain three cities—Charlotte Amalie on the island of St. Thomas, with a population of 7,747, and Christiansted and Frederiksted, on the island of St. Croix, with populations of 4,574 and 3,144, respectively.

Agriculture and animal husbandry engaged 6,084 of the total population as owners, managers or tenants on the 430 farms or "estates" on the islands. These farms embraced 69,892 acres of the 84,781 acres included in the total area of the islands. Of the 430 farms reported, 102 were operated by white farmers as owners, managers or tenants; 270 by negroes, and 58 by mixed-blood farmers. The average size of farms is 162.5 acres, of which an average of 91.7 acres was reported as improved and 70.8 acres as unimproved. The total value of farm property is given as \$3,706,911. The number of farms reporting live stock was 381, the value of which was given as \$582,921. The total value of all crops for the year ending October 31, 1917, was given as \$522,606, sugar cane contributing \$442,120 and hay and forage \$67,589.

The number of manufacturing establishments in the islands was 84, of which 65 were located on St. Croix, 3 on St. John and 16 on St. Thomas. The number of persons engaged in manufactures was 842, of whom 685 were wage-earners. The capital invested was \$1,429,524; the value of materials used \$781,417, and the value of products, \$1,292,247. Of the total value of products, cane sugar contributed \$978,188, bread and other bakery products \$192,544, and bay rum, \$38,745. The manufacture of sugar from cane employed 62 per cent. of the wage-earners, 76 per cent. of the capital and produced 80 per cent. of the total value of the products of manufactures. Distribution and hours of labor of the gainfully employed, by sex and age, are interesting features of the population and manufactures statistics of the report.

The census of the fisheries of the islands, the first ever taken, shows a total of 380 persons engaged in the industry, with capital invested of \$11,002, and a total catch for the year valued at \$44,436.

In addition to the sections devoted to statistics of population, agriculture, manufactures and fisheries, an introductory chapter of the report gives much interesting information of the geography, history, climate, etc., of the islands and maps and illustrations are interesting features of the publication.

Write to Scott & Scott, Inc., Advertising Offices, 144 East 32nd Street, New York City or 29 East Madison Street, Chicago, for particulars about advertising in this magazine.

AGENTS

LIBERTY BONDS. We pay full cash value. Absolute reliability. Send registered mail to Commercial Finance Co., 505 World Bldg., New York City.

PH

WRINKLES

With this **Double**

Big Premium Budget 10c
 17 Popular Songs with Music, 13 Portraits,
 Actresses, Presidents of U. S., 14 Complete
 Stories, 12 Magic Tricks, 48 Amusing Ex-
 periments, 12 Recipes, 22 Rabbits, 80 Par-
 ticles, 120 Riddles and Conundrums, 100 Jokes, and Fun-
 ny Readings, 80 Money-Making Secrets, 48 Album Verses,
 Dictionary of Dramas. Send us 10c, and we will send all
 the above, and Big Novels and Jewelry Catalogue.

E. J. DEMPSEY, Dept. 1, 12711 80th Ave., Woodburn, N. Y.

Boys, you can make good money each month selling THE BOYS' MAGAZINE. Write us to-day for 5 copies. Send no money.

THE SCOTT F. REDFIELD CO.,
Dept. A-101, Smethport, Pa.

If you play quaint, dreamy Hawaiian music or latest songs on the Ukulele you will be wanted everywhere. We teach by mail 20 simple lessons; give you free a genuine Hawaiian Ukulele, music, everything - no extras. Ask us to send the story of Hawaiian music. You will love it. No obligation - absolutely - free.

The Hawaiian Institute of Music
1400, H. P. Jones Bldg., Suite 2511, N. Y. City

FREE snapshots. Makes beautiful pictures. Complete instructions. Easy to operate. Own a Genuine Eastman Promo, it won't cost you one cent. We give these cameras FREE for selling 20 packages of Bingo Perfumed Tropic Wax at 12c each. Easy to sell. Order today. Send no Money.
Bingo Co. Dept. 899 Binghamton, N.Y.

The image consists of four vertical panels, each showing the back of a man's head and shoulders. The panels illustrate different stages or types of hair loss and treatment. From left to right: the first panel shows a man with a completely balding head; the second panel shows a man with thinning hair, particularly on the crown; the third panel shows a man with a full head of hair, possibly after treatment; and the fourth panel shows a man with a full head of hair, similar to the third. The panels are arranged horizontally and are separated by thin vertical lines.

Would You Like Such a Result as This?



Do you want, free, a trial box of Keskott, that has proved successful in so many cases? If so, simply send a stamped address by postcard or letter, asking for **FREE BOX**. This famous preparation is for dandruff, thinning hair and several forms of **FREE** **HAIR** **LOSS**. In many cases, reported when men also had failed. So why not see for yourself? Keskott is used by men and women; it is perfectly harmless and often starts hair growth in a few days. Address: Keskott Laboratories, 310 Madison Ave., New York.

WITH THIS
SAFETY HAIR CUTTER

If you can COMB your hair you can cut your own hair with this marvelous invention. Cuts the hair any desired length, short or long. Does the job as well as any barber in quarters or the time, before your own mirror. You can cut the children's hair at home in a jiffy. Can be used as an ordinary razor to shave the face or finish around temple or neck. Responded like any razor. Lasts a lifetime. Saves its cost first time used. **PRICE ONLY \$5.00, postpaid. Extra Blades 5c each.**

JOHNSON SMITH & CO., Dept 2287, 54 W. Lake St., CHICAGO

NEW SCIENTIFIC WONDER
"X-RAY" CURIO

BOYS You apparently see thru Clothes, Wood, Stone, any object. See Bones in Flesh
A magic trick novelty FREE with each X Ray.
MARVEL MFG. CO. Dept. 13, **NEW HAVEN, CONN.**

This is wonderful news. It is absolutely true that you can learn the complete K. in a shorthand system in a few hours. You can acquire speed in taking down dictations, speeches, phone messages, etc., even when a person speaks rapidly. To prove it, send for free lesson to King Institute, EB-101, Station F, New York, N. Y. You'll astonish and delight yourself by improving your efficiency and earning power. Learn in spare moments at home or while riding in car. Trifling expense; untold benefit.



imitation Wrist Watch with adjustable leather strap and buckle and these four lovely Rings. All given Free to anyone for selling only 12 of our Jewelry Novelties at 10c each. Fresh from factory.

C. M. DALE MFG. CO
Providence, R. I.

September Morn Ring, Free
The beautiful raised figure of the young girl is a wonderful reproduction in metal of the original painting. The background is hard enameled in two colors to represent sea and sky. Ring is made of "Everbright Silver" warranted five years. We send it size, for only 12c to help pay advertising.



"We've been watching you, young man. We know you're made of the stuff that wins. The man that cares enough about his future to study an I. C. S. course in his spare time is the kind we want in this firm's responsible positions. You're getting your promotion on what you *know*, and I wish we had more like you."

The boss can't take chances. When he has a responsible job to fill, he picks a man **trained to hold it**. He's watching you right now, hoping you'll be ready when your opportunity comes. Start today and train yourself to do some one thing better than others. You can do it in spare time through the I. C. S.

No matter where you live, the I. C. S. will come to you through the mails. No matter how humble or important your present job, I. C. S. training will push you higher. No matter what your chosen work, some of the 280 practical I. C. S. home-study courses will suit your needs.

cal, Electrical or Civil Engineer? A Chemist?	STATIONARY ENGINEER	Commercial Law
An Architect? A Building Contractor? Hundreds of thousands of men have climbed into high jobs in the technical and scientific fields of I. C. S. help. Do you want to advance in business—in Advertising? In Salesmanship? Many of the country's foremost Advertising and Sales Managers have been successful by the help of I. C. S. training. Commercial Law? Accounting? All over America bookkeepers, accountants, office managers, and private secretaries, are reaping the rewards from time invested in I. C. S. training in these subjects.	Marine Engineer Draftsman ARCHITECT Architectural Engineer Architectural Draftsman Concrete Builder Electrical Engineer PLUMBING AND HEATING Shorthand Telephone Operator or Supt. PHARMIST	GOOD ENGLISH Teacher Common School Subjects DIVERSITY CIVIL SERVICE Railway Mail Clerk AUTOMOBILE OPERATION Auto Repairing Auto Work AGRICULTURE Private Baking
		Spanish French Italian
	Name _____ Present _____	

The first step these men took was to mark and mail this coupon. Make *your* start the same way—and make it right now.

Occupation _____
 Street _____
 and No. _____

Express, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

ADVERTISING

Electric Lighting and Ry. Electric Wiring Telephone Work
Graphic Engineer Telephone Work
Mechanical Draftsman Mechanical Drafting
Toolmaker Carp. Practice
Cass Engine Operator
Civil Engineer Surveying and Mapping
Electrical Engineer Stationary Engineer
Marine Engineer Ship Design
Architect Ship Design and Builder
Architectural Structural Concrete Building
Civil Engineer
Electrical and Heating
Mechanical Work
Textile Dresser or Supt.

COLLECTING

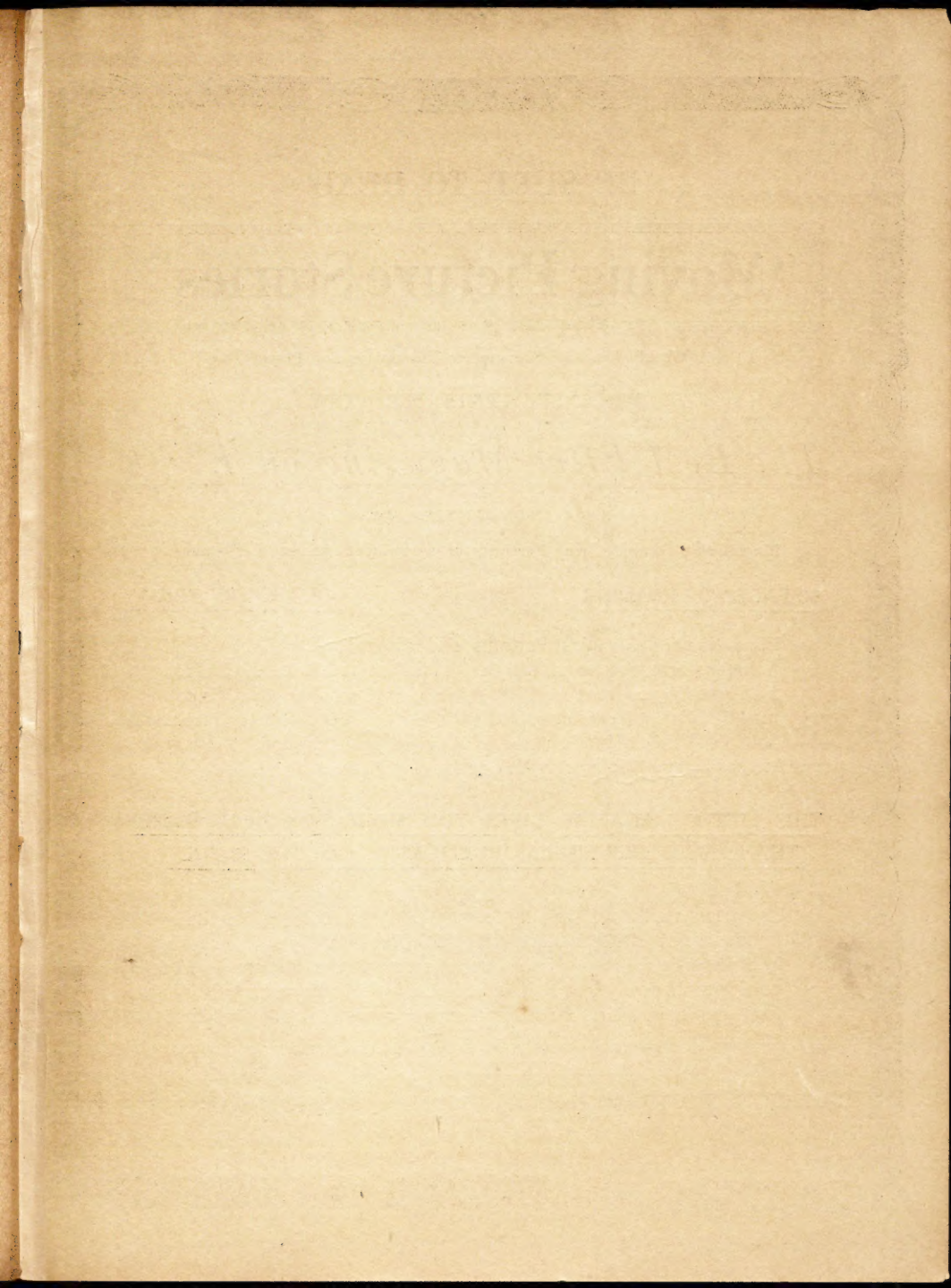
COMMERCE

Card Writer Sign Painter
Salesman ILLUSTRATING
Cann. Practice
BOOKKEEPER
Stenographer and Translator
Public Accountant
TRAFFIC MANAGER
Insurance Commercial Law
COMM. ENGLISH
Teletype
Common School Subjects
Mathematics
CIVIL SERVICE
Military
AUTOMOBILE OPERATING
Laid Handwriting
English
AGRICULTURE
French

Name _____
Present _____
Occupation _____
Street _____
and No. _____
City _____ State _____



CANCERS and Tumors Successfully Re-
moved. Testimonials and Health
Herald Free. Pay after the treatment. Ad-
dress Dr. E. O. Boynton, Fitchburg, Mass.



BE SURE TO READ

"Moving Picture Stories"

A Weekly Magazine Devoted to Photoplays and Players.

PRICE SIX CENTS PER COPY

The Best Film Magazine on Earth

FOR SALE ON ALL NEWS-STANDS.

Magnificent Colored Cover Portraits of Prominent Screen Performers!

32 PAGES OF READING

OUT EVERY FRIDAY

Each Number Contains Portraits and Biographies of Actors and Actresses—Five Stories of the Best Films on the Screens—Elegant Half-tone Scenes from the Plays—Interesting Articles About Prominent People in the Films—Doings of Actors and Actresses in the Studios—Lessons in Scenario Writing—Poems, Jokes and every bright Feature of Interest in Making Moving Pictures.

THIS LITTLE MAGAZINE GIVES YOU MORE FOR YOUR MONEY
THAN ANY OTHER SIMILAR PUBLICATION ON THE MARKET.

Its authors are the very best that money can procure; its profuse illustrations are exquisite, and its special articles are by the greatest experts in their particular line. No amount of money is spared to make this publication the very best of its kind in the world. Buy a copy NOW from your newsdealer, or send us 6 cents in money or postage-stamps, and we will mail you, postage free, any number you desire.

HARRY E. WOLFF, Publisher,

166 West 23d Street, New York City